CHAPTER-5
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, RTE AND SCHEDULED CASTE CHILDREN

Introduction

This chapter seeks to delineate the background and introduction of Right to Education. In this, it tries to understand the formation and structure of the recently introduced Right to Education Act (2009) in the system of elementary education and its implementation in government schools. It also explores the backdrops of implementation of RTE Act (2009) on Schedule Caste children’s educational status in Shrawasti district.

Primary education has been always a central issue, so it has been emphasised from the very beginning. thus various schemes were started to increase the access, enrolment and retention in schools, and, the recent RTE Act (2009) is one of them. In 2002, the Parliament of India through the 86th Constitutional Amendment Act added right to education, Article 21A to the Constitution of India, making education a fundamental right of every child in the age group of 6-14 years. In 2004 education cess was introduced for raising additional financial resources needed to fulfil the government’s commitment to universalise elementary education. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act was enacted 2009 and it became operative in the country on 1st April 2010. This initiative implied that every child has right to elementary education of adequate and unbiased quality in a formal school which accomplish certain crucial norms and quality. The Act (2009) also makes it compulsory to governments to provide free and compulsory education to all children between the age of 6-14 years.

Background of Elementary Education, Right to Education and Social Exclusion

Before inclining into the discussion regarding implementation effects of Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 in the Shrawasti district, it is substantial to explicate the background of RTE Act 2009. Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009 refers to the Right
of children to Free and Compulsory Education under this Act, passed by the Indian Parliament in 2009, which mandates free and compulsory education to all children of 6-14 years of age until they complete elementary education in a neighbourhood government school. The Act also has mandates that every child, who is above six years of age and has not yet been admitted to any school or could not complete his/her elementary education due to any reasons, shall be admitted in class appropriated to his or her age. The child admitted in class accordingly his age has a right to receive special training or additional instructions in order to be at par with other children of the class. There have been various specific efforts by central, state governments and voluntary organisations for improvising conditions of education of the Schedule castes who suffer inequalities in educational opportunities. As Schedule Castes has been defined earlier in the introduction of the thesis therefore only the status of Schedule Castes’ education after the implementation of RTE Act 2009 is being discussed in this chapter. By placing gaze at RTE Act (2009) the effort has been made to look where the Schedule Caste Children stand on the line education system?

Right to Education was introduced in India by Mahatma Jotirao Phule more than 125 years ago. A substantial part of the memorandum presented by him to the Indian Education Commission (The Hunter Commission) 1882 depicts that how the British government generated funds from labour or downtrodden working population to provide education only to “Brahmins (caste) and the higher classes” even as masses wallowed in ignorance and poverty (Sadgopal 2010:17). Similarly Sriprakash (2006) drawing insights from Kumar’s work “Political Agenda of Education: a Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas” writes that the democratic rhetoric of “mass” education carried political value, but the school system was not sufficiently expanded and thus remained accessed mainly by upper-caste/class men (ibid:30).

In 1892, Maharaja Sayaji Rao Gaekwad, the king of Baroda successfully tried to make compulsory education in nine villages of Amraili city Talluqa in British India. In line with this, Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1911 forwarded his Free and Compulsory Education Bill in the Imperial Legislative Assembly, where faced tough resistance. The members who stood for the advantaged classes from Mumbai, Maharajas and other rulers from princely states and the big landlords from feudal areas discussed that the conditions in the country were not ripe for such Bill and the quickness should be
evaded rather to support the Bill. The Maharaja of Darbhanga from Bihar himself collected 11,000 signatures on a Memorandum from princes and landlords stating concern about what would happen to their farm operations if all children were required to attend the school. Another leader, Vittal Bhai Patel presented a bill in the provincial Legislative Assembly of Bombay. The aim of this bill was to introduce compulsory primary education in the municipal areas of the provinces. It was considered as the pioneer revolution in the field of education when the bill was become an Act in 1918 and was called Bombay Primary Act. This was the first Act which mandated the principal of compulsory primary education by the Government of Province. This enactment was also followed by the states of Bihar, Orrisa, Panjab, Uttar Pradesh, Central Provinces and Madras.

At the National Education Conference held at Wardha (Maharashtra) in 1937, Mahatma Gandhi had to use all the moral powers at his direction to convince the Ministers of Education of the newly elected Congress governments of seven provinces to give priority to Basic Education as Nai Talim for seven years and allot sufficient funds for this purpose. The ministers kept on claiming that there was scarcity of finance (Singh, 2012:88). This growth of compulsory primary education stretched till 1930 but after that from 1931-37 the development of compulsory education delayed.

During the Constituent Assembly debates, an associate challenged the promise made in the draft Article (later to be known as Article 45) to provide "free and compulsory education" to children up to 14 years of age should be limited to only 11 years of age as India would not have the required resources. The strength would have been hopefully made but for Dr. Babasaheb BhimRao Ambedkar's clarity of mind, that is, at this age of 11 years that a considerable proportion of children become child labourers. He argued that the place for children in independent India should be in schools, rather than in farms or factories. The rhetoric of ‘resource crunch’ for education of the masses directed the Constituent Assembly for even a more crucial decision. The report of the Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights placed the aforesaid provision on education among the list of justifiable Fundamental Rights. The recommendation was considered by the Advisory Committee of Constituent Assembly in 1947 (Sadgopal 2010: 18).
After independence, Indian government has made the “right to education” for all children aged 6 to 14 years, an enforceable legal right under Article 21A of the Constitution in 2002. It became one of the few countries in the world where elementary education is a fundamental right of its citizens (Kumar 2006:12). In the field of education, various Committees and Commissions were constituted which did wider consultations and made recommendations for it. On the basis of these recommendations, a *National Policy of Education* (NPE) was formulated in 1986 (Kumar 2006, Sharma and Ramchandran 2009, Govinda and Bandhopadhyay 2013). The *Programme of Action* was initiated in 1992 which spelt out short term, medium term and long term measures to achieve the targets as spelt out in *National Policy of Education* (1986). This was followed by various programmes and projects, both at the National and State levels and the progress made under them were considered.

After constitution of NPE, at the primary/elementary level, some of the programmes were started up to strengthen the education system such as District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, *Shiksha Karmi Yojana*, Bihar Education Project, *Lok Jumbish*, Non-formal Education Programme, Education Guarantee Scheme, *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya* etc., which had their own advantages and specific objectives. The Article 46-depicts that the Indian state will enhance educational and economic interests of the weaker sections through particular ways, especially consider to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. It also protects them from social injustice and other forms of exploitation. The government has responsibility to not only guarantee universal elementary education, but also to take special steps to enable socially marginalised children to enjoy their right to education. This was again inscribed in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986/1992.

NPE emphasizes on the elimination of disparities and ensuring equal educational opportunities; in terms of access along with conditions for successful completion of education. This picture shows the necessity of proper attention from government towards the needs of those who have been excluded so far in the social milieu (NPE 1986/1992:6-8). Enforcing this mandate, under Article 28 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989, the Indian state endorses children’s right to education and commits to attain this right on the basis of equal opportunity. An important aspect of this right is that education must be accessible to all, especially the
most vulnerable children, in law and in fact, without discrimination (CESCR 1999:3). This right, and especially its equity component, has been interpreted to mean not only equal opportunity, but also the creation of conditions in which the disadvantaged sections of society can have the opportunities to be educated (MHRD Report, 2011:24).

The creation of such conditions may require different strategies for different groups of children, due to the diversity of circumstances and socio-economic barriers children face to accessing and completing their education. This is the way through which state can ensure equity to excluded population. However, even today, the system has several challenges which need to be met though the enrolment of children in schools has gone up. Even though, the population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are represented in appropriate proportion, substantial numbers of children drop-out at upper primary level. The reasons for the same are well known and efforts are being made to give them another opportunity to complete their education at least till the elementary level. In this context, Sadgopal (2010) writes that the policy debates on education until the formulation of the National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE-1986), at least in principle, covered the goal of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) in conjunction with the goal of moving towards education of equitable quality. The NPE-1986 is perhaps the first policy document since independence that attempted to de-link Universalisation of Elementary Education (UEE) from the agenda of ensuring schools that are designed to provide equitable quality education for all (ibid:22). Against this backdrop, the country felt the need for making education a fundamental right in 2009 by RTE Act passed and elaborated upon steps to be taken up to achieve it.

The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) committee was constituted as a first step to drafting the RTE Bill. The bill was submitted to the government in June 2005, although without any consultations being held with the public. It was found wanting on several fronts, beginning with its definition of a "child" (not less than six years and not more than 14 years), to not owning up to the economic responsibility of the union government while fleshing out the provisions. Further, not only did the bill have none of the tenets of the Common School System (CSS) that would have allowed for compulsory and uniform quality education to all, but it was also unable to
suggest specific amendments necessary in the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The government, however, dithered on moving ahead with the recommendations made in the draft RTE Bill, 2005, citing lack of funds, and drafted a Model Right to Education Bill, 2006, and proposed providing incentives to states for adopting the Model Bill. This was, clearly, a move to weaken whatever had been attained through enacting the 86th Amendment in 2002. It made a mockery of Article 21A of the Constitution by misinterpreting free, universal and compulsory education. Due to a combination of factors, including public pressure, a decision was finally taken to introduce a central legislation in the budget session of Parliament in 2008. Although the redrafted RTE Bill 2008 was not made public or opened to consultations, the union cabinet went ahead and cleared the draft bill on 31 October 2008, with some changes, this got enacted as the RTE Act 2009.

We, as a country, are moving towards Universalisation of Secondary Education but cannot overlook the existing problems of Education at the Elementary Level. After providing the snapshot of stages of development of Right to Education it is mandatory to discuss Right to Education Act 2009 which stands as pillar in elementary education in India along with its all states. The next section has been articulated in such a manner which inflects the educational status of Uttar Pradesh.

Right to Education Act 2009 and the issue of Social Exclusion

So far, we have discussed the background of the right to education and the phases of its development in colonial and independent India. Now, we focus on features and characteristics of the right to education in terms of opportunities, implementation and as social exclusion which seemed to integral part of it. Education is a primary source for children especially of socio-economically marginalised communities to lift themselves up from poverty and to obtain the means to participate fully in everyday mainstream community life. In a country like India where more than half of the population lives under economic scarcity many parents may not be economically able to send their children to primary schools at their cost. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the government to raise funds through taxation and spend it for providing primary education which benefits the entire society in the long run. This section is primarily based on the provisions under RTE Act 2009 for Scheduled Caste
children in India as well as Uttar Pradesh, since it is one of the states of India which has incorporated RTE Act 2009 in its school system.

According to its definition, Right to Education Act 2009, creates a space for legally enforceable entitlement to free and compulsory elementary education from Class 1 to 8 for all children aged up to 6 to 14 years. RTE Act 2009:

- defines a child as male or female age of 6-14 years.
- provision of right to transfer of school to any other school. To give more clarity to this RTE Act 2009 explains that if any hindrance is coming in getting transfer certificate it is the school administration who is totally responsible for it.
- Special provisions for children who have not been admitted to school or not completed elementary education are eligible to get directly admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age.
- It gives right to persons with disabilities to take admission into neighbouring government schools, attendance and completion of quality elementary education, as well as access to and participation in all academic and non-academic activities and functions based on principles of equity and non-discrimination.
- Duty of state and local authority to establish school.
- Sharing of finances and other responsibilities.
- It is the duty of state and local authority and school to provide free and compulsory education to every child of age of 6-14 years in a neighbourhood schools, to ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education, to ensure that children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups are not discriminated against and prevented from, must pursue and complete elementary education, to provide infrastructure including school building, teaching staffs and learning equipments.
- No capitation fee and screening procedure for admission.
- Proof of the age for admission.
- No denial of admission.
• Prohibition of holding back and expulsion.

• No school to be established without obtaining certificate of recognition.

• Organisation of School Management Committee (SMC) is consisted of elected representatives of the local authority, parents of children and teachers to monitor the working of the school, prepare and recommend school development plan and also to monitor the utilisation of grants.

• Pupil teacher ratio.

• Availability of play material and sports equipment.

These were the clauses mentioned in Right to education Act 2009 related to school and children. After going through the clauses of RTE Act 2009 a question arises which seemed to be substantial that where are the third genders in the category of child? Are they not the citizens of this country? Okay! It is another relevant topic related to right to education which needs to be emphasised. Right to Education Act 2009 refers to the kind of education keeping with constitutional values and principles, as well as the objectives of education uttered in Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 and other international human rights conventions (UN). Children should comprehend their potential in terms of cognitive, emotional and creative capacities. These factors can be clustered as four features of the right to education, for which state and schools should have an overall monitoring and developmental strategy: (i) availability, (ii) accessibility, (iii) acceptability and (iv) adaptability. Particularly, the latter three features consist of crucial aspects related to equity and inclusion within each school/neighbourhood.

However, a dimension, equity is not sufficiently covered by both the government and civil society organisations (Govinda and Bandhopadhayay 2013:6). It holds the bunch of issues that does not ensure equality and inclusion in schooling of the children. Equity in education means that all children should have equal access to, in and through elementary education to acclaim their potential and endeavours (Sedwal and Kamat 2013:92). Equity is interpreted to mean not only equal opportunity, but also the creation of enabling conditions in which socially excluded children can avail the opportunity to receive elementary education (Nambissan 1996:1011). Equity is also acknowledged under Sarva Sikhsha Abhiyan as a central theme of the agenda of
improving the quality of education. This is attained by generating a greater understanding of the issues adding to exclusion and disadvantage come up from inherited inequalities among them. Non-discrimination is comprehended as a least, core state mandate that has immediate effect, irrespective of the availability of resources. Hence, reformatory steps should always be ready implement in all schools to both prevent and redress discrimination of any kind (CESCR 1999:3). The contextualised education policies are built to address the inherited prejudices that support social exclusion of poor and socially excluded children through equity.

Various issues under the dimension of equity are infrequently raised in terms of unequal provisioning of education for children, discrimination and exclusion of children from certain social groups in schools, which leads to dropouts from school, and inequalities in learning outcomes. Hence, the uneven number of girls and children from Dalit/ Adivasi/ Muslim communities among the population of out-of-school children, child labour, barriers that poor and disadvantaged parents face to engage with schools, and so on. As, Ramachandran (2009) writes that it is important to the state to pay more focused attention towards pre-school education and elementary education by enhancing financial as well as academic resources to create good quality schools accessible to all children. If the government abdicates this space, it is the poor and the marginalised who will bear the brunt of this neglect. As it is today the economic and social background of the children determines what kind of schools they go to and with lower investment in government primary schools, the poorest would be the hardest hit and within them children from disadvantaged social groups-especially, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. These hierarchies of access in schooling have been well-documented.

**Right to Education and the special provisions for SCs students in Schools**

The title of the RTE Act 2009 emphasises on the words ‘free and compulsory education’. ‘Free education’ means that no child, other than a child who has been admitted by his or her parents to a school which is not supported by the appropriate Government, shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education. There is a provision of paying such kind of fees in government elementary schools not including capitation fees. Capitation fees refer to any kind of donation or contribution or
payment other than the fee notified by the school. ‘Compulsory education’ casts an obligation on the appropriate Government and local authorities to provide and ensure admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in the 6-14 age groups.

With this, India has moved forward to a rights based framework that casts a legal obligation on the Central and State Governments to implement this fundamental child right as enshrined in the Article 21A of the Constitution, in accordance with the provisions of the RTE Act 2009. In RTE Act 2009, child belonging to disadvantaged group means a child belonging to the Schedule Caste, the Schedule Tribe, the socially and educationally backward class or such other groups having disadvantage, owing to social, cultural, economical, geographical, linguistic, gender or such other factors as may specified by the government must be entitled to right to education (RTE Act, 2009). Here, the government has recognised a category as disadvantaged group in which it includes a plethora of people which have been depicted in the above line. There is no such hard boundary of specific provisions of providing elementary education for Schedule castes who are more in numbers in the state and much oppressed also.

Some of the provisions related to equity and inclusion in Right to Education Act are cited here and touched upon, but not yet codified into standards, under the Act, those are:

i. *social access*, in terms of community mobilisation, creating a welcoming environment in schools, parent/community engagement with schools, transportation and safe access schools, institutional support for out school children, infrastructure barriers for children with special needs;

ii. *equal participation in schooling*, in terms of participation in various school activities without experiencing discrimination, equal opportunities, special provisions, affirmation/encouragement of all children, child participation, parent/community participation;

iii. iii) *equitable educational outputs*, which require building teachers’ sensitivity towards different academic levels and needs of children, curriculum activities, flexible timings of schools, academic support for disadvantaged children, adequate budgetary allocations;
iv. inclusion in education, in terms of inclusion point, inclusion in activities and grievance remedies.

According to Twelfth five year plan (2012-2017) which ensures that extraordinary support would be needed to guarantee safeguards and improved learning for children from Scheduled Caste communities that are socially, economically and educationally deprived and discriminated. These efforts need to converge with the programmes of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MSJ&E). There is a need to review and revise curriculum dealing caste-based exclusion and promoting inclusion. Interventions for SCs include (i) process-based interventions such as curricular review to include discussion on caste based discrimination in textual material; (ii) residential schools run with assistance from the MSJ&E to conform to the RTE norms; (iii) convergence on pre-matric scholarships and incentives provided by MSJ&E; (iv) partnerships with Dalit Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) for support of Dalit children.

As discussed in the previous sections so far, it is necessary to plan the stretching out the learning of children from underprivileged backgrounds. It is only when the particular efforts and provisions translate into learning gains that such children has get real chance to complete and go beyond elementary education. Until now, we have discussed the existing literature on RTE Act 2009, its phases of development from where it has been started and how it has became implementation after independence period. This was overall picture of Indian state and the data which has been narrated to express the RTE situation in India. Now to understand the better picture of the UP particularly Shrawasti we discuss its own situation.

**RTE Act 2009 and Scheduled Caste Children: Reflections from the field**

For a brief understanding, the enactment of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 is a step in the right direction. This entitles children to have the right to education enforced as a fundamental right. The road ahead, however, seems to be rough, given that the "how" and the "where to" remain ambiguous in several important respects in this otherwise significant enactment. As such right to education act (2009) ensures free and compulsory education to all but in
reality in Shrawasti it portrays a bleak picture. This section broadly analysis of the interviews of the parents, of the school going children and school teachers.

In Shrawasti almost after six years of enactment of Right to Education Act 2009, people of rural district have not aware of the said Act. According to graph 5.1 vast majority of parents of Scheduled Caste children (82.3 percent) do not have any information about Right to Education Act 2009 they said that school teacher has never discussed about RTE. However, only 17.7 percent parents of Scheduled Caste children were aware about the Right to Education Act. Among them only 8 percent know through media sources like news paper, radio and Television whereas 7 percent came to know through some of their friends and 2.7 percent knew about it through school teacher. Murthy (2016) in her study also reveals that 67 percent parents have not heard of RTE Act in their life yet (ibid:52). To ensure universalisation of elementary education for children, government of India by support of the State government provide free books and free uniform every year. The schools provide school uniform for children to create discipline and uniformity among children and to reduce the economic burden of the parents. In Shrawasti 88.7 percent children gets free uniform and books according to their parents in the last year. The remaining children did not get uniform and books in the previous year as they were absent from the school on the days when these things were being distributed among children. When asked for the school uniform and books from the school, the school authority/teachers distributed only books but not uniforms. These children said that they are using old uniforms for school the stitches of which have been opened.
According to Table 5.1, mostly, heads of the households of Scheduled Caste said that they send their children to government school that is 97 percent but in reality according school data and interviews conducted with kids reveals that they do not go to school regularly. Here the question is not about going to school only, but instead going to school regularly since in Shrawasti there was quite high rate of enrolment in elementary schools. For primary it is 93.34 percent enrolment whereas for upper primary it is 55.7 percent children in schools (District Report Card 2015-16:1280).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.1: Do you send your children to school regularly?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This shows a sense of inferiority among schedule caste households’ heads in revealing the truth that they do not send their children to school daily. Since 66.78 percent of SC kids said that they do not go to school on regular basis. Among them the proportion was high for girls. There is not a singular reason rather various reasons to not sending their children to school such as those children who do not go to school would help them in fields or the girls would help their mothers in household chores. As, Manjrekar (2013) and Jha and Jhingran (2005) highlight that parents ask help from their children due to their low social and economic status irrespective of their genders but the division of labour works as a crucial theme in the society (ibid: 167, 91). However, these scholars write that the need of domestic help from the children in the context of economy but it is their social status which prevents them from achieving economic equality in the social order. The parents wonder that what they will do after getting education, who will give them job, our caste positions in the society does not let us uplift our status; therefore it is better to not waste time in studies rather to work for earnings.

Govinda and Bandhopadhyay (2013) argue that the causes for not sending children to school or exclusion from school is them being first generation learners and their parents or guardians are illiterate too (ibid:68). It was a fact in the Shrawasti that the parents send their children only to learn how to read and write so that their children could read any official papers. It is also a serious cause of huge dropouts among SCs.
In the RTE Act 2009 provisions it is clearly stated that parents along with school and local authority is responsible for accessing and completing elementary education of the child but in Shrawasti where most households are daily wage earners how could they send their children to school.

Graph 5.2 shows the overall data of school going children in Shrawasti but when we discuss about female school going children the scene is comparatively miserable.

Graph 5.2 depicts around forty two percent (42.3%) parents do not send their daughters to school regularly. This percentage was derived from the total number of interviewed school going girls which was 133. It shows prevalence of huge gender inequality among SCs in sending their children to school. In this context, Valeskar (2013), Sharma and Ramachandran (2009) and Bandhopadhyay and Subrahmanian (2013) point out that gender is recognised as key social barrier to school enrolment (ibid:112-9-138). Bandhopadhyay and Subrahmanian (2013) highlights that parental preference for male children plays a crucial role in determining household preferences and attitudes to education (ibid:133). Those 57.7 percent girls who go to school regularly are those who are mostly enrolled in class I-V. Interviews conducted with the respondents shows that those who are younger are likely to go to schools. There may be various causes behind it, such as, they are very young so they could not contribute in any kind work whether it is productive or household. Another factor which matters a lot in sending these children to school is the parents feel free and get proper time for their work without hindrance.
When it comes to the question why they do not send their girl child to school? According to graph 5.3 a large number of families 36 percent out of 42.7 percent respond that they do not send their girl child to school because they need domestic helps from them and they say finally girls have to do this in their whole life so it is very much needed for them. Whereas 3.7 percent families said that education is not compulsory for girls because they are someone else’s property, they have to go to their in-laws houses, they have to make contributions in household activities and reproduce children for their families.

Rest of the 2.7 percent families reported that they do not feel safe to send their daughters to school. Though, it is a small number but this is very miserable to hear because in a country like India where women are considered as second gender and her identity is associated with chastity prevents them from availing education. The reason why they do not feel safe to send their daughters to school is their growing age. They thought that other men stare at them that poses question to their chastity/identity. The parents said that these upper caste men always have a bad eye on our daughters and many times they tease our daughter on the way to school. So, if something wrong happens to our daughter who will marry them. Chanana (2006) writes in the context of safety of girls in sending schools, that the division of structure of the schools and their physical location affects girls much more than the boys. The transition from primary to upper primary school corresponds with transformation from girlhood to
womanhood that is puberty, and the social concerns affect the decisions of the parents in withdrawing their daughters from the school (ibid:215). This overall picture suggests that how household chores and marriage is closely associated with girl child however they also have equal opportunity to get education.

Case Study 1: An excerpt from the interview, Suman, the oldest among the four children of Ram Bahadur and Devanti from Chahlwa in Hariharpur Rani, is 13 years old and does not go to the school regularly because her younger siblings Raju (11.5 years old) and Mahesh (8 years old) go to school. She also had a sibling Pintu (5.5 years) who stays at home. Her mother works as labourer in her own small piece of land and also has to take care of her cattle (goats). In peak days of harvesting, she works in other’s field of the neighbouring village for earning little amount of money in cash. Whatever her father earns is spent on her grandfather’s health as he is suffering from asthma (respiratory disease) along with continuing fever which has not been diagnosed thoroughly yet. She does household chores such cooking, washing dishes, pasting floors with mud and cow-dung and also takes care of her younger siblings as feeding them since her mother is doing other works. Ram Bahdaur works as a helper in factory based in Jalandhar, Punjab as he is educated till 10th standard. He keeps coming on festivals and in emergency.

Subrahmanian (2007) writes in the context of gender inequality in primary and secondary education that existing norms about what men and women do, and how their activities and roles are to be valued, sets their educational opportunities. Thus, households may discriminate, as often they do, against girls in favour of boys in accessing education. These are clearly relative phenomena as boys are also likely to be excluded from school in some contexts of poverty or conflict, but where children are sent to school, boys are often advantaged over girls (ibid:42). It is often assumed that women perform it is often assume that women perform household chores voluntarily and as a result of their natural instincts, rather than recognising that the division of labour is socially constructed, creating asymmetries between women and men in the distribution of resources and power. Naturalising these differences has over time translated into inbuilt social norms that define anticipated behaviour for
men and women becoming widely accepted as a cultural sanction for the unequal treatment of women.

While discussing about Right to Education Act 2009 while conducting interviews in Shrawasti district it is remarkable to notice that although, the government of India (GoI) with the support of state government implemented the Right to Education Act 2009, which clearly ensures free and compulsory education for all but in reality in the research area 29.3 percent parent face problems to get admission of their ward in government school meanwhile 11 parents reported that teacher ask for money from them as fee. It seems a crude reality that how school administration (teachers) is violating the norms.

| Table 5.2: What is your opinion on your child regarding quality of education in school? |
|-------------------------------------|--|------------------|
| Response | Frequency | Percent |
| Yes | 135 | 45 |
| No | 165 | 55 |
| Total | 300 | 100 |

While the class room is not the only aspect of quality education what takes place in the classroom is nonetheless important and, as a unit of analysis. There are various reasons that have appeared to contribute to the quality of education. The quality of education determines the good quality of future of the child. The quality of education would be ensured through teaching and learning process. In this, the message should be conveyed through the way a child could ‘learn and analyse’. According to Table 5.2 more than half of the children do not understand what the teacher has been taught in the classroom. But why the children do not understand what has been taught in the classroom? In answer to this, their parents said that, mostly teachers come from upper caste families therefore they are not interested to teach, make able to learn our children. They already have preconceived notion about our lives particularly as we are dirty since our economic status is low. The teachers thought about us that we send our send our children to get food for free of cost not to learn.
Case Study 2: An excerpt from a discussion with a mother of a school going child Shyam (9 years) child of class IV study in Pure Adhari village. She narrated that how the school teacher scolds and makes abusive comments on her child who was taking her permission to go to toilet because they belong to upper caste and also they have more money. In her words, the teacher said, “You! The son of Basfor (Dom Caste) come to school to eat for free of cost provided by government so all the time you go to discharge faeces”.

With reference to the above statement Vasavi (2015) and Jeffery (2005) write that many of the teachers due to their social and cultural background with its own logic and rationale endorse and reproduce many biases and prejudices about children (ibid: 41-2095). There is a fact that government schools have the high proportions of school going children from schedule caste communities. Universal access requires schools of equitable equality. It is important to ensure that birth in particular caste does not define one’s life chance forever. Elementary schooling should ensure comparable opportunities for understanding what has been taught (monitor) to children which also an integral part of the mandate of RTE Act 2009 as a whole.

According to parents’ views 14.7 percent children do not learn in the school because they show little interest towards learning in the classrooms. Since their focus is on playing. Simultaneously, children expressed that, “we do not understand because neither the teacher nor our parents clarifies the things which have been taught once in schools. Our classmates from upper caste community understand those things because teacher responds to them politely and their family members also make them learn. It portrays the fault of the school teacher as the parents of these children are illiterate and comparatively less educated than upper caste. The other 40.3 percent parents of children gave reason of not learning their child in school is the low interest of the teacher in teaching them in schools. In this context, Jeffery (2005) writes on the basis of the study conducted in Bijnor district of Uttar Pradesh on Chamars (a scheduled caste), “teachers in many local schools preventing them from progressing in schools so they discriminate them on the base of their caste” (ibid:2095).
According to Graph 5.4, mostly parents (97.7 percent) were not able to help their ward to complete their homework because most of them were illiterates. Those who were literate they had had scarcity of time because they work from early morning to late evening in the fields or on the construction sites to earn livelihood for their family and mothers too were having the same sort of problems. Jha and Jhingran (2005) on the basis of their study conducted in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh in the north India write that literacy and schooling of parents are positively linked in many ways with school participation pattern among their children (ibid: 120). In Dalit families, both parents are found to be illiterate which result inadequate help in learning and also completing the homework of their children by them. As Govinda and Bandhopadhyay (2013) write that participating in schools and successfully completing the whole cycle with no one at home to support and to understand schooling processes is a challenging task for many learners. Moreover, many of these households are from low socio-economic groups. The solution to providing support for first generation learners seems to lie in rigorous efforts by government and community based campaigns for effective school functioning (ibid: 68).

Under the provisions of RTE Act 2009, constitution of a School Management Committee (SMC) in every Government elementary school with an account of 75% of members from parents or guardians of children and 25 percent shall be from elected representatives of local authorities, from school teachers and local educationists or children in the school by the decision of parents and committee is
mandatory as one of the points indicates in the said Act. Among the various tasks, this Committee has also been commended with the task of making the communities aware of the rights of children in relation to education, monitoring of the quality of education and the duties of State Government, local authority, school and parents, for monitoring and implementation of the midday meal program in schools and preparing an annual account of receipts and expenditure in schools. In fact, according to Graph 5.5 depicts that a huge number of parents that is 88 percent from Shrawasti reveal that they do not aware of existence of SMCs or its functions. In the context of SMCs, participation of parents in it is compulsory. Malik (2015) writes that SMCs is a provision in the RTE Act for involvement of the community and parents for better managements of schools (ibid: 27). So, it is obvious that when they even do not know about SMCs how it is possible to be part of it as a member.

According to Right to Education Act 2009, there is a provision of Parents Teacher Meeting (PTM) under the organisation of SMC once in a month. According to Graph 5.6, in Shrawasti a huge number of people approximately 85 percent parents from them who knows about SMCs reported that teacher never invite them to school for any kind of meeting with regard to their children or anything else. The remaining of 15 percent who know about SMCs said that they (SMC committee members from the school) ask to come to school very infrequently. There is no regular basis of meeting as mandated in SMCs curriculum. They (parents) were unable to clearly state that how many times did they attend PTM. Only 15 percent parents were invited by school teacher to attend parent teacher meeting in which teacher does not necessarily discuss the children’s condition and their performance in the classroom rather call them for having signatures on the documents as formality which shows the commencement of PTMs.
Rejoining school of the drop-outs is a significant point mandated in RTE Act 2009. The Act also has a provision for every child, who is above six years of age and has not yet been admitted to any school or could not complete his/ her elementary education due to any reason, to be admitted in a class appropriate to his or her age. According to Table 5.6, 86.7 percent parents said that school does not motivate drop out children or their parents to join school again. Though, there is 93.34 percent enrolment at primary level whereas 55.7 percent (District Report Card 2015-16) for upper primary level in Shrawasti at elementary levels of schooling but it does not literally meant as the completion of elementary education. It is the fact that dropout rates in primary education particularly at upper primary level accounts high. There may be various causes and factions for dropouts such as religion, caste, class, ethnicity and gender too. Dropouts among SCs are more higher compared to other castes among them SC girls are more disadvantaged in this social construction.

To crosscheck the outcomes of the question ‘motivation for rejoining the dropouts’ it was reiterated to school staff. Their responses were totally shocking as they said, “we almost organise a meeting every month and ask its members to come and participate where we discuss about school functioning and achieving education for all kinds of goals. We ask to our members to promote rejoining schools through their parents who have dropped school for any reason”. One thing which seemed noticeable was that in the whole research period in field there was not a single formal meeting held in any of schools instead once in winters (December) school teachers were gathered at the local authority’s courtyard with some papers and asked a child to call his father (who was a member of SMC) for discussion. It was moreover a general talk related to village politics and household rather a SMC meeting where the welfare of a child/school is considered to be discussed.

Provision of schooling facilities at appropriate locations is an essential prerequisite to elementary education. In most of government elementary schools dalit/other marginalised community children are enrolled. Schedule caste lives in segregated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>86.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3: Does School motivate you to re-joining the dropout students?
clusters because of their lower social identity (Thorat 2009: 48). Physical segregation adversely affects access to school unless the school is located within the *dalit* habitation. According to Graph 5.7, schools were mainly located outside of the SCs locality. As, it was discussed earlier in the same chapter that due to the safety measures for *dalit* girls their parents do not send them to school because of the distant location of the school from their residence. Therefore, it is noticeable that the too much distance between the school and *dalit* locality affects the education of especially girl children since parents of boys send them to school in large numbers.

![Graph 5.7: Location of the School (in Percent)](image)

It is need of the hour to invest more on the most disadvantaged and deprived to ensure that they could access the best quality elementary education so that we can proactively break the barriers, accumulated distortions of the past, this may impose a huge challenge on education planners and policy makers. Instead of pushing the burden of finances on each other, the central and state government must ensure that they shall provide better kind of education to its citizens. For that the government has to make availability of resources and to achieve it we have to create a strong and autonomous quality assurance mechanism, where all schools are made accountable to ensuring children learn and are provided a nurturing environment for development. Since the right to education is not about optimal allocation of funds rather it is about ensuring that every single child has access to education of comparable quality at all levels and it will start from the elementary level. It will be going against the spirit of this right, if we relegate the poor to as numbers for achieving goals not as citizens who needs quality to life.
References


http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx accessed on 01.04.2017


