

PART - I
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A BACKGROUND STUDY OF CULTURAL,
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL
FACTORS AFFECTING WOMEN'S
ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN INDIA
IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE.

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Most nations of the world have become development-minded. This is all the more true with the less developed countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. The less developed countries had been stagnant and poor for centuries under the dominance of stronger nations. They are now in a state of revolt against poverty, disease and ignorance. "They are no longer disposed to entrust their future exclusively to the forces of the market, the whim of the nature, or the judgment of the colonial rulers."⁽¹⁾ They have been awakened to the potency of education as a kind of level which can lift their people culturally, socially, economically and politically. They have, therefore, now engaged themselves in the exercise of finding out ways and means of expanding

and extending benefits of education within limits which their resources would permit, to all the sections of their population. The recent trend all over the world in the developing country is to extend the benefits of education to the under-privileged backward classes and the weaker sections of their society. In most of the developing countries of the world women constitute one of the weakest sections of their society. Expansion of educational facilities for women has become a major programme of educational reconstruction in almost all the semi-developed and developed countries of the world. The affirmation of equality in regard to education contained in Article I of the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation adopted in London on 16th November 1945 gave an impetus to the movement for improving women's access to education.

- "(1) The purpose of the Organisation is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of the law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the people of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.
- (2) To realise this purpose the Organisation will give fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture..... by instituting collaborations among the nations to advance the ideal of equality of educational opportunity without regard to race, sex or any distinctions, economic or social."

The equality of rights as between the sexes has been repeatedly and explicitly affirmed in the legislation of all developed and most of the developing countries. This has been a distinct improvement for women's access to more, richer and varied education. In the past, in many developing countries either this equality of rights for women was not mentioned or much less frequently affirmed in national legislation. When equality of opportunity was extended to women, in a number of developing countries, the affirmation of equality as between sexes existed in regard to the general rights of citizens. However, the equality of educational opportunity for women is practically everywhere affirmed in an implicit way by legislators.

Women's access to education has considerably improved all over the world in the last two decades, and the seventies will witness further expansion of women's education. Some recent trends in the educational systems of the developing countries are particularly noteworthy in this respect. The many gaps left over in the decades of colonial rule in several sectors of education are now being attempted to bridge through comprehensive and perspective educational planning; schemes of expansion of mass education, women's education and adult education are being given good priority; education is being looked upon as a powerful instrument of social change and greater use of science-based technology is being largely advocated as a means of transforming a

tradition-dominated society into a modern one; education is also being looked upon in an increasing degree as an investment and women have been looked upon as a vital component of man power and human resources, their fullest possible development through education is being continuously stressed.

"History shows numerous instances where small social groups and elites have used education as a prerogative of their rule and as a tool for maintaining their hegemony and perpetuating the value upon which it has rested."(2)

Concern is being also expressed to do away with such social injustice and establish equality of educational opportunity for all the sections of society irrespective of any difference in caste, colour, creed, sex or social and economic position or cultural backwardness or advancement.

The establishment of a direct link between national development and prosperity and education has been one of the most conspicuous features of the educational systems in the world. In semi-developed and developing countries four things are being particularly advocated in educational development : (i) there should be more investment of gross national product (GNP) per capita in education; (ii) the expansion of education should be geared specially to the manpower needs of the country and women should be considered as good and as important manpower as men; (iii) education

must be related to productivity; and (iv) priority should be accorded to the rapid expansion of the education of the weaker sections of the society. In semi-developed and developing countries, women are considered weaker sections of the society.

In a number of countries primary education has been made universal, compulsory and free. This is for both boys and girls. The developing countries, too, have made legislation on compulsory education for both boys and girls. Whereas in developed and advanced countries, compulsory education has been extended beyond primary education age and cover secondary education, in developing countries the enforcement of primary education for boys and girls has not yet become either very vigorous or the countries' resources being inadequate, they are not able to make universal provision of schools, teachers, equipments, etc. for the children of the compulsory age. In a number of under-developed and partially developed countries the percentage of girls enrolled in primary schools is between 20 to 40 per cent (3). The enrolment of girls in secondary schools is small and that in the institutions of higher education still smaller. The drop-out or wastage rates for girls in primary education are very high, so that only a small fraction of girls who enter the first grade ever complete the fourth, fifth, sixth or the seventh grades. The large number of single teacher schools, the large number

of incomplete primary schools, the lack of motivation, the uninteresting teaching that fails to interest and inspire the pupils', too much theoretical courses unrelated to the practical needs of girls; social prejudices for keeping girls longer at school, and a lack of a clear-cut economic incentive for keeping girls at school^{are the causes.} Girls are withdrawn from schools because they are useful for work at home.

In under-developed and partially developed countries, a number of factors operate that impede women's access to education (4).

- inadequate educational facilities in terms of schools, teachers, equipment, etc.
- parents' economic conditions
- the unfavourable custom and the climate of social opinion
- traditional attitude that a woman's place is home
- the inadequate advances made in the emancipation of women
- girls introduced to domestic tasks at an early age
- opportunities being more limited in the case of women than those of men
- preponderance of rural and backward areas
- appointment to public offices being still not open to women
- over-protection of girls by their parents
- fear of the loss of morality of girls entertained by parents

- a high demand for woman uneducated labour
- strong social prejudice against women engaging in certain types of heavy and dirty work
- the belief that employment of married women damages family life
- lack of any system of apprenticeship for women in most trades
- undifferentiated school curricula, etc. etc.

As against these impeding factors, there are some factors that favour women's access to education. They are :

- legislation on women's right to education
- legislation on compulsory and free primary education
- gradual development of feminism
- growing economic pressures almost forcing their parents to educate them and employ them in gainful work
- growing popularity of co-education at least at primary stage
- women recognised as essential manpower
- profound social changes taking place throughout the world
- special privileges being accorded to girls with a view to promoting their education, e.g. free education, special scholarships, etc.

In developed and advanced countries, women enjoy equality of opportunity to a very great extent and they

have practically little impediments to their access to education. In developing countries, women's access to education still suffers from many impediments. But even there also women's access to education has recorded considerable advance in the last two decades. "Although women are still in a minority at the more advanced levels of education, their number is increasing. The trend is such that women will probably fairly rapidly overcome existing social, economic, and educational hindrances, within a period whose precise length depends on the country concerned."

2.2 THE CASE OF INDIA

Harbenson and Myers include India among one of the 21 semi-developed countries of the world, with a bottom third rank just above Mexico and Thailand* (5). However, Indian writers usually describe India as a developing country (6). The Kothari Education Commission has given to the nation a monumental plan for using education as an instrument of social change and national development.

The Commission has identified several areas of national inadequacies where education has to play a role of social,

* India's composite index of development is 35.2, the mean being 50, the median 48 and the range 33.0 to 73.8.

economic and political development of the country. These areas cannot be adequately and effectively covered unless women's access to education has been considerably expanded and enriched along with that of men. Some of the main areas are (7) :

- self-sufficiency in food, almost a condition of survival for the country;
- removal of the colossal poverty of masses, the large incidence of under-employment or unemployment among the people; doubling the national income per capita (at constant prices) by 1985-86;
- achievement of social and national integration;
- deepening the foundation of democracy by the creation of an educated electorate, a dedicated and competent leadership and the cultivation of essential values like self-control, tolerance, mutual goodwill and considerations for others all of which make democracy, not only a form of government, but a way of life;
- development of human resources through a properly organized programme of instruction, training and research;
- the use of education as an instrument of change by carrying the benefits of good and effective education to all the sections of the people and to both the sexes through a national system of education and by increasing the social purposes of education;

It is for the first time in the history of education in India that an Education Commission has so penetratively probed into the complex causes of slow, inadequate, improper and ineffective system of education, viewing them from the angle of national development, and coming out with concrete proposals for a comprehensive, perspective and phased programme of educational reconstruction. In this programme, the expansion and enrichment of education of women have received as much weightage as men's education. The Commission's treatment of the theme of the reconstruction of education provides a new rationale for speedier, greater and richer development of female education at all stages, particularly at the school stage. The Commission has said :

"For full development of our human resources, the improvement of homes, and for moulding the character of children during the most impressionable years of infancy, the education of women is of even greater importance than that of men. (underlining ours)..... Education of women can assist greatly in reducing the fertility rate. In the modern world, the role of the woman goes much beyond the home and the bringing up of children. She is now adopting a career of her own and sharing equality with man, and responsibility for the development of the society in all its aspects. This is the direction in which we shall have to move".(g)

Development of a programme of adequate and speedy expansion of women's education is, therefore, one of the urgent needs of the developing society in India today.

We will now turn to a broad discussion of the fundamentals of women's education and the factors and forces that favoured or impeded women's access to education in India in historical perspective and review its present position.

2.3 EQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

One of the prominent features of the awakening of the societies in developing countries is the demand of the people for social justice. This takes many forms. In education, it takes the form of equalization of educational opportunity for all the sections of the society. The backward or under-privileged classes - the weaker sections of the society should have as much opportunity as the advanced classes and the privileged sections to improve their lot by having unhindered opportunity to develop their talents, capacity and personality so as to achieve self-realization. Equality of educational opportunity is a very important social objective of education. It is intended to ensure 'greatest good of the greatest number of people'. Women in India have been denied, to a great extent, this equality of opportunity.

The General Assembly of the United Nations adopted, on 20th December 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which advocates the principles of "non-discrimination" on the one hand and the "right to education" on the other.

On 14th December 1960, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted a Convention. According to this Convention, the term "discrimination" means -

"any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preferences which, being based on races, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, economic condition or birth has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing equality of treatment in education and in particular :

- (a) of depriving any person or a group of persons of access to education of any type at any level;
- (b) of limiting any person or group of persons to education of an inferior standard;
- (c) subject to the provision of Article 2 of this Convention, of establishing or maintaining separate educational systems or institutions for persons or groups of persons; or
- (d) of inflicting ^{on} any person or group of persons conditions which are incompatible with the dignity of man". (9)

Pierce adds that the term 'inequality' of opportunity includes situations which are not, as a rule, the result of deliberate discriminatory intention on the part of the State or of certain groups not even due to the persistence of prejudices concerning particular sections of the population (10).

The Indian Constitution provides for fundamental rights for all the citizens of the country. These rights are : right to equality; right to freedom, right against exploitation, right to freedom of religion, cultural and educational rights, right to ^{property} ~~poverty~~, and right to Constitutional remedies.

The right of equality implies three rights : equality before law, social equality and equality of opportunity in public employment. Social equality means that the State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth.

Thus, discrimination and inequality are constitutionally and legally prohibited in the country. Even then, inequality continues to persist, despite many efforts, in the weaker sections of the Indian society. In developing countries, including India, these weaker sections include, among others, women. The basic determinants of this inequality are mainly cultural, social and economic, educational and political.

Its cultural determinants are : narrow concept of Dharma and justice, the fear of easy loss of morality by women through public exposure, the traditional place assigned to women in home, traditional prejudice against employing male teachers in girls' schools, introducing girls to domestic tasks at an early age, women even if possessing all the required qualifications, are denied appointment to public offices, women's education by tradition always oriented to family life, etc.

Its social determinants are : rigidity of caste structure, low social status for women, the use of the Purdah system for women, early marriage, social prejudice

of traditional families to having educated daughters-in-law, the slow pace of women's emancipation, etc.

Its economic determinants are : parents' economic conditions, higher cost of secondary and university education, imbalance in educational expenditures on women's education, limited professional and technical education open to women, limited career open to women, large scale unemployed educated males, willingness of parents to make more sacrifice for the education of their sons than for that of their daughters, unwillingness of employers to engage married women, etc.

Its educational determinants are : lack of or inadequate provision of free education upto a given level which constitutes the principal entry point to the productive labour force, lack of adequate provision of separate and/or mixed girls' schools, insufficient number of women teachers, women inspectors and women educational administrators, etc., lack of differentiated curriculum for girls suited to their practical needs in life, partly by design and partly by low population density, not providing that children from diverse backgrounds attend the same school, not providing for equality within a given locality since local taxes are for providing educational facilities for both boys and girls, exercise of discrimination in providing education to girls from certain social classes, denial of opportunity to women according to their talents, aptitude and capacity,

reservation of places in certain types of institutions only for men; lack of facilities for continuing education for girls.

These are some of the determinants of the inequality of educational opportunities for women. Unless these obstacles are removed, the basic conditions for bringing about equality of educational opportunity for women will not be met.

Provision of equality of educational opportunity constitutes thus the fundamentals of women's education. These fundamentals have dimensions or focal points - cultural, social, economic, political and educational. Before we discuss, in detail, how these different dimensions of equality of educational opportunity actually operated and affected women's access to education in India in the long history of India in the past, we would briefly depict the picture of the imbalance in women's education by way of citing the conclusions of some studies by noted scholars and educational statistics published by Government. This is intended to provide a kind of a background in the form of a concrete picture of the results of all those cultural, social, economic, political and educational factors and forces that operated as assets or impediments to women's access to education in India over the long period of the history of India.

2.4 IMBALANCE IN THE EDUCATION OF WOMEN

In the Vedic and Brahmanic Periods, down to about 800 B.C., women enjoyed the right of receiving the Upanayana Samskar which was followed at least by a short period of Vedic studies. Therefore, at this period of Indian history when women did not have religious disabilities, there must not have been much serious imbalance in the women's access to education. Sometimes towards the end of the Vedic period, women were gradually losing their religious privileges which had resulted in the growing educational backwardness and imbalance in the education of women. In the Upanishadic and Epic times, during 800 B.C. to 200 B.C., there is fairly conclusive evidence to show that women belonging to higher classes had access to a working knowledge of the daily Vedic and Smārta rituals and some of their Mantras. Altekar says that in this period -

"girls used to be divided into two classes, Brahma-vadinis and Sadyodvahas. The former continued their education for a long time and used to become experts in religion, philosophy and literature. The latter used to stop their education when their marriages were arranged". (11)

This implies that till 200 B.C. at least women of higher classes - aristocratic and commercial communities - had good access to higher education.

Altekar further says that towards 250 B.C. the formal Upanayana, necessitating some amount of primary and Vedic education became unpopular, and imbalance in the women's

access to education began to rise. As early as the 3rd century B.C., the Aitiasayana school which advocated cancellation of the religious and educational privileges to women was gaining ground in the society. Megasthenes observed, "Brahmins do not communicate a knowledge of their philosophy to their wives". (12)

In the age of the Smritis and Puranas, during 200 B.C. to 1200 A.D., further deterioration in women's education set in. The vast majority of women were unable to recite the Vedic hymns properly and great degree of illiteracy had begun to manifest itself among women.

During the Muslim rule in India, the percentage of literacy among women went down very rapidly.

"Old rich and cultured families, as a rule, ruined by the political revolution, were no longer in a position to make special arrangements for the education of girls. There were, of course, no schools for girls. Some new Hindu families may have no doubt risen to importance in the new regime; but their number was very small and they did not generally possess sufficient culture to induce them to appoint teachers for their girls. Daughters of the Rajput Chiefs were usually able to read and write till the end of the nineteenth century; Jain widows too were sometimes taught reading and writing by the monks with a view to enabling them to read their scriptures. These were, however exceptional cases. The decline in literacy after the 11th century was so rapid that by the beginning of the 19th century hardly one woman in hundred could read". (13)

At the beginning of the 19th century, there was hardly any provision in the country for the formal education of

girls. The educational inquiries that were undertaken in the Madras Presidency in 1822, in the Bombay Presidency in 1824-29, and in the Bengal Presidency in 1833-35, revealed that education was almost prohibited to girls (14). Though missionaries and some enlightened Indians had begun to strive lion-heartedly to spread education among girls in the teeth of public opposition and strong social prejudice, the progress of female education was tragically slow till the end of the nineteenth century. Whatever little provision was there for female education, it was limited to communities like Anglo-Indians, the Christians, the Parsis and the upper classes of the Hindus.

The following was the position of female education in 1881 (15) :

Table I

Females Under Instruction (1881)

Province	Proportion to total female population	
	Females under instruction	Females who can read and write but not under instruction
Madras	1 in 403	1 in 166
Bombay		
(i) British territory	1 in 431	1 in 244
(ii) Indian States	1 in 1232	1 in 655
Bengal	1 in 976	1 in 568
N.W.F.	1 in 1416	1 in 1028
C.P.	1 in 1539	1 in 1165
Assam	1 in 2226	1 in 1331
Coorg	1 in 180	1 in 219
Hyderabad	1 in 3630	1 in 1632
Ajmer	1 in 865	1 in 220
India	1 in 858	1 in 434

In 1881, the imbalance in the education of women was very great. "For every 1000 boys at schools, the number of girls under instruction was only 46; and while one adult male out of 16 could read and write, only one adult woman in 434 could do so".(16) At the beginning of the twentieth century, in 1901, the situation had improved, but it was still very unsatisfactory. The imbalance was still very great. The number of girls enrolled for every 100 boys was only 12 at the primary stage and 4 at the secondary stage.(17)

Between 1901 and 1921, there was further progress in the education of women. Still, however, the great imbalance persisted. At the university stage there were 14 women students per every 1000 male students; at the secondary stage there was some improvement in the position - for every 100 boys the number of girls under instruction was 11; at the primary stage, too, the situation had improved - for every 100 boys enrolled there were 23 girls under instruction. Thus, the imbalance in the women's access to education at all the stages was apparent. It was noticeable between different provinces too. In 1922, the total number of females under instruction in all institutions was about 3.9 lakhs in Madras, 3.5 lakhs in Bengal, 1.9 lakhs in Bombay, 1.0 lakhs in the Punjab, 1.0 lakhs in U.P., 0.50 lakhs in Assam, ^{and} 0.4 lakhs in C.P. (18)

Between 1921-22 and 1936-37, during the administration of education under the Diarchy system by the Indian Ministers, the imbalance continued. For every 100 boys under instruction, the number of girls enrolled at the university stage ^{between} was 1 & 2, at the secondary stage in high schools was 10, and in the middle school was 14 and at the primary stage was 28. The imbalance among the Provinces continued to be marked and significant. In 1937, the number of girls under instruction in all institutions was 9.1 lakhs in Madras, 7.2 lakhs in Bengal, 7.3 lakhs in Bombay, 2.4 lakhs in the Punjab, 2.2 Lakhs in U.P., 1.2 lakhs in Assam and 0.8 lakhs in C.P. (19).

The situation regarding the imbalance in the education of women at the different stages did not much change between 1937 and 1947. Desai gives the following analytical picture : (20).

1. At the university stage in colleges of general education for every 100 boys, girls under instruction were only 12;
2. At the university stage in colleges of professional and special education, for every 100 boys enrolled, the girls under instruction were only 7;
3. In high schools, for every 100 boys, only 14 girls were under instruction;
4. In middle schools, for every 100 boys, only 22 girls were under instruction;

5. In schools of special education, the proportion of boys and girls under instruction was 100:12;
6. In 1941, the percentage of literacy for women was 6.0 as against 22.6 for men.

The province-wise picture of imbalance in 1947 was somewhat as under. The figures are Madras 14.0 lakhs, Bengal 8.9 lakhs, Bombay 5.9 lakhs, the Punjab 3.8 lakhs, U.P. 3.1 lakhs, Bihar 1.9 lakhs, Assam 1.6 lakhs, and C.P. 1.2 lakhs.

Thus, during the British rule great imbalance in women's access to education persisted. In other words, the inequality of educational opportunity operated all throughout the British period of 150 years.

When India became free, one of the national aspirations was to correct this imbalance at the earliest possible date. The Constitution of India bestowed ^{upon} women the right to equality. The national plans of development in education increased national efforts in this direction. Women's education at all stages and in all fields began to make rapid advances. However, the imbalance persisted, though the range of the gap between the education of males and females began to close in gradually. This is evident from the Table II (21).

Table II

Education of Girls and Women (1950-51 to 1965-66)

	1950-51	1955- 1956	1960-61	1965- 1966
1. Enrolment of Girls in Classes I-V				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	5,385	7,639	11,401	18,145
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	39	44	48	55
2. Enrolment of Girls in Classes VI-VIII				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	534	867	1,630	2,839
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	21	25	32	35
3. Enrolment of Girls in Classes IX-XI				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	163	320	541	1,069
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	15	21	23	26
4. Enrolment of Girls in General Higher Education				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	40	84	150	271
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	14	17	23	24
5. Enrolment of Girls in Vocational Courses (School Standard)				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	41	66	86	120
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	28	31	25	23
6. Enrolment of Girls in Professional Courses (Collegiate Standard)				
(1) Total enrolment (in 000's)	5	9	26	50
(2) No. of girls for every 100 boys enrolled	5	7	11	14

The imbalance existing in women's access at the school stage
in different States of India in 1969 is given below :

Table III
Percentage of Enrolment by Sex (1969)

State/Union Territory	Class IV		Class V-VIII		Class IX-XI	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Andhra	83	58	46	18	23	8
Assam	93	55	42	17	37	12
Bihar	84	30	33	6	24	3
Gujarat	104	65	49	28	32	17
Jammu & Kashmir	94	37	49	18	42	12
Kerala	123	114	83	70	36	30
M.P.	82	36	36	11	22	5
Maharashtra	108	81	60	34	38	14
Mysore	101	77	48	25	26	10
Nagaland	148	79	69	16	30	9
Orissa	95	54	42	8	21	5
Punjab	18	61	59	26	21	9
Rajasthan	70	32	38	8	18	3
Tamilnadu	118	91	69	38	42	18
U.P.	102	64	42	10	20	5
West Bengal	89	55	45	20	31	9
A. & N. Islands	120	86	51	30	19	12
Chandigarh	88	84	80	70	47	37
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	80	40	27	8	10	5
Delhi	97	88	92	69	59	40
Diu, Daman and Goa	100	65	67	45	40	28
Himachal Pradesh	106	68	79	27	39	13
Manipur	130	90	53	25	38	13
NEFA	61	8	14	10	10	4
Pondicheri	120	90	71	38	46	22
Tripura	85	66	49	30	28	13
India	96	59	47	20	29	10

The above Table throws ^aflood of light on the imbalance operating in the education of boys and girls at the school stage in different States and Union Territories in India. At the lower primary stage in classes I to V, the gap between the enrolment of boys and girls in terms of percentage continues to be very wide in the States of Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and in the Union Territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli, N.E.F.A. and Himachal Pradesh.⁽²³⁾ The gap widens up at the middle school stage and still further at the high school stage. At the middle school stage the imbalance is more pronounced in all the States other than Gujarat, Kerala, Mysore, Tamil Nadu and Punjab and in all the Union Territories except A and N Islands, Delhi, N.E.F.A., Pondicherry and Tripura. At the high school stage, the States where girls' access to education is comparatively better are Gujarat, Kerala, Mysore, Tamil Nadu and the Union Territories; where the imbalance is comparatively less are Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli, Delhi, Goa, Daman and Diu, and Pondicherry. Considering the country as a whole, there were 59 girls for every 96 boys in classes I-V, 20 girls for every 47 boys in classes V-VIII and 10 girls for every 29 boys in classes IX-XI. At the higher education stage, the imbalance is most glaring. In 1966, for every 100 male students enrolled in colleges of general education, there were only 2 women students enrolled and in colleges of professional colleges this number was only 14.

Thus, in India, correction of the problem of imbalances in the progress of women's education has continued to be threatening even after the 24 years since the attainment of independence. It has now become more serious and challenging at the secondary and university stages than at the primary stage. The Fourth Plan envisages the raising of the percentages of enrolment of girls in the age-group 6-11 from 79.2 in 1968-69 to 92.3 in 1973-74 and in the Fifth Plan the imbalance in the girls' access to lower primary education will be removed ^{perhaps} ~~altogether~~; For 100 per cent enrolment of boys and girls in the age-group of 6-14. The Kothari Commission had set the deadline in 1985-86, but this will ^{perhaps} have to be moved ~~further~~ up to 1990-91. It is difficult to estimate as to how many more years would be further required after 1990-91 to remove the imbalance in girls' education at the high school and higher secondary school stage.

2.5 IDENTIFICATION OF CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

In the preceding section we attempted a brief and broad survey of the imbalance that operated in the women's access to education in India throughout its long history ~~beginning~~ from the ancient times to the present day. The question that naturally interests a research worker is : What were the causes of this imbalance ? What factors and forces impeded the women's access to education and contributed to the imbalance created in the education of the two sexes ?

A good deal of literature is available which traces the growth of development of education in India from the ancient times to the present day and discusses the progress of education in varied perspectives. From this literature, it is possible to identify several factors that must have affected the progress of women's education in India from the ancient times to the present day. Not all the impeding factors were operative at all times; some factors operated as strong obstacles at some periods of India's history, and others functioned likewise at some other periods of her history. Some factors operated as favouring women's education at one time and obstructing it at ^{some} other time.

These factors can be broadly classified as under :

- (a) religious
- (b) social
- (c) economic
- (d) political : government educational policy
- (e) political : nationalism
- (f) educational
- (g) financial
- (h) others

Each one of these factors will be discussed in detail in the succeeding sections.

2.6 RELIGION AS A FACTOR FAVOURING OR IMPEDING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Religion as an educational factor in the progress or otherwise of women's education had its place in ancient India. Its significance is mostly historical. It has almost ceased to be an educational force in modern times with the adoption of the policy of secularism in education during the British rule, and adoption of secularism of the State as a basic policy of the governance of the national life under the Indian Constitution after the attainment of independence.

Religion was a very powerful force in the life of an individual in the early years of Hindu Civilization. "Religious rights and privileges were valued most highly; even political and property rights faded before them in importance. The social status of an individual was virtually connected with the place religion accorded to him in its rites and rituals" (23).

In the Vedic age, women enjoyed all the religious rights and privileges that were extended to men. A woman was not at all considered an impediment in the path of religion. In fact, her participation along with man in religious rites and ceremonies was indispensable. It was held religiously that man could not become a spiritual whole, nor could he be accepted by Gods for symbolic admission in heaven unless he was accompanied by his wife. The wife used

used to take an active and real part in family religious sacrifices. A woman in the Vedic age, thus, enjoyed equality in religion. This gave her high social status.

The Upanayan ceremony, which entitled one to study the sacred texts, was performed for boys and girls alike (24). Mukerji observes :

"Brahmin boys of eight are to be initiated and taught and the same right belongs to girls, Unmarried girls should be taught Vidyā and Dharmaniti..An educated Kumāri brings good to the families of both her father and husband" (25).

Thus, in the Vedic period, women enjoyed religious, social and educational equality. They had an equal right to study the sacred texts, participate almost on equal basis and jointly with men in religious rites and ceremonies, and almost all professions were open to them on equal terms with men. Desai, therefore, maintains that universalism in education was prevalent among women (26).

But Aryans began to come in contact with non-Aryans. They began to bring non-Aryan wives in the Aryan families. Desai regards this as a turning point in religious and educational equality that was enjoyed by the Aryan women. He says :

"The question soon arose whether the non-Aryan wives also should have the same right to study the sacred texts which the Aryan wives had, and the problem was ultimately decided by denying to all women, whether Aryan or non-Aryan the right to study the sacred texts. This led, in course of time, to the discontinuation of the Upanayan

ceremony of girls, and finally a stage was reached when the right to education was altogether denied to women and it began to be argued that they needed no education at all" (27).

There is another way in which also religion, which once played a vital role in extending equality of educational opportunity to women, came to curtail it. Altekar gives the following explanation for it (28). During the age of Brahmanas (1500 B.C. to 1000 B.C.), the Vedic studies became very extensive with a number of subsidiary sciences developed and with lengthy commentaries written on Vedic texts; the spoken dialect of the age had begun to differ considerably from the Vedic hymns; a theory had found universal acceptance that to commit a single minor mistake in the recitation of a Vedic Mantra would produce the most disastrous consequences to the reciter; women used to be married at the age of 16 or 17 and could therefore give only 7 or 8 years to their Vedic studies and the society was not prepared to tolerate perfunctory or inadequate Vedic studies; Vedic sacrifices became also very complicated. All these had ^{an} adverse effect on women's participation in Vedic rites and rituals and their participation in sacrifices became a mere matter of formality which eventually tended to cut short the equality of educational opportunity that they previously enjoyed.

Thus, Hinduism as a religious force first helped and later hindered the development of equality of education of opportunity among women.

In the later period, the Buddhist religion began to dominate the life of the people. Desai feels that, as Buddhism was a revolt against certain aspects of Hinduism, particularly the caste-system, it naturally made a better contribution to universalism in education than Hinduism did (29). Buddhism threw the study of the sacred texts open to all; it expected every one to be free from ignorance; it created bands of workers whose duty it was to educate the masses; but its services were more for the benefit of men than for women. Mukerji also says that "the very scheme and philosophy of life proposed by Buddhism would only regard women as objects to be shunned by the religious" (30). Though later Buddha, with considerable reluctance and misgiving, consented to admit women as his disciples and established an order of nuns, restrictions were placed on them based on the estimate of woman's worth. It is true that Buddhism produced some remarkable characters among women both within and without its own fold; but it cannot be said that it contributed as much to the universalism of education among girls as it did to that of boys.

Islam, as a religion, was better equipped to provide equality of educational opportunity to women than even Hinduism and Buddhism. The Prophet enjoined that women should also be given education (31). However, as Islamic societies actually came to be developed in India, women enjoyed much lower status than men, and this had its warping effect on the further curtailment of equality of educational

opportunity for women. Islam as practised during the Muslim Rule in India even adversely affected the education of Hindu women by creating for them a climate of insecurity which was mainly responsible for the introduction of educationally harmful customs like early child-marriages and the Purdah System. Women in India, both Hindus and Muslims, if at all they received education were taught at home by their families. Such was the finding of the Inquiries by Munro (Madras), Elphinstone (Bombay), and William Adams (Bengal) in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Christianity, as a religion, had contributed very largely to the evolution of the concept of universalism in education. Desai refers to the unique contribution of Roman Catholicism in terms of a large number of teaching orders who worked selflessly, and as a mission of life, to spread education among masses, and also points out to the fact that the "Roman Catholics believe that religion must be an integral part of all education, not merely as an additional subject, but as a spirit that pervades the teaching of every subject and fills the whole atmosphere of the school"(32). But Desai argues that Calvinism contributed more to the growth of evolution of the concept and practice of universalism in education. Both James Orr and Herbert Fruster hold that Calvinism believed that education was not enough for the priestly class, but it was



insisted upon for laity as well (33). John Calvin (1509 - 1504) advocated that every one should be taught the three R's and should be able to read the Bible for himself or herself (34). The Puritan-Calvanistic zeal for education had contributed much to the introduction of universal and compulsory education in European countries and in America. In India also, we owe much to the early missionaries for the spread of education among the humble strata of the society and among women. Of course, their main objective was to convert Hindus into Christians and, through educational activities, to obtain access to the people in circumstances where Christianity could be made the subject of communication or conversation (35). The work of the Protestant Danish Mission in the Province of Madras (1706 - 1792), the work of the Serampore Trio and others in Bengal (1758-1813), the work of the General Baptist Missionary Society, the London Missionary Society, the Church Missionary Society, the Wesleyan Mission and the Scotch Missionary Society during 1813-1833 - all contributed their mite to the growth of education of the masses. For our purpose, their most valuable work was in the field of education of women.

"The missionaries did extremely valuable pioneer work in the field of the education of women - a dangerous area in which the officials of this period refused to tread. The wives of the missionaries and some women mission workers took the lead in the matter and began to work for the spread of education among

women. This was done through three types of activities, viz. (a) operating the day schools for Indian girls, (b) establishment of Orphan Homes, and (c) domestic instruction or Zanana education for the families of the middle and higher classes"(35).

In the twenties of the nineteenth century day-schools for girls came to be established in all the three British Presidencies of that time. In Bengal, the Calcutta Baptist Female Society took the lead for the establishment and support of native female schools. The American Missionaries opened the first school for Indian girls in 1824. Among the early missionaries who made the spread of education among Indian girls as their life-work, the name of one Miss Cook (later Mrs. Wilson) is the most conspicuous.(37)

Thus, it is the Christianity - the Christian Missions, which made a beginning for the spread of education among the Indian girls in organised schools.

Religion lost its effectiveness as a force for increasing women's access to education after the British rulers adopted a policy of religious neutrality in dealing with problems that concerned the Hindus and the Muslims. In fact, they used their policy of religious neutrality for not providing directly for girls' education because they feared that it would injure the religious feelings of the Hindu and Muslim communities. In the secular education during the British rule and thereafter in the Independent India, religion had no role to play as a contributing factor to the progress of women's education.

2.7 SOCIAL FACTORS AS FAVOURING OR IMPEDING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

In ancient India, in the early Vedic period, because of the high religious position occupied by women, they also enjoyed high status. It is claimed that women of the early Vedic period enjoyed comparatively higher social status than women in the contemporary societies of Greece and Italy. The age of marriage for women in India was also fairly high. Women in the early Vedic period had, therefore, better access to education. In the later Vedic, Sutra and Epic periods, a slow deterioration in the social status of women began to set in. Their age of marriage began to go down - marriage before puberty became the general rule during the times of the Smritis and Puranas; marriage also became obligatory for them; they gradually ceased to be the productive members of the society. These factors considerably curtailed women's access to education. They rarely received more than elementary education. The entry given to ill-educated non-Aryan women as wives in Aryan households began to lower down the social status of women further. This had disastrous effects on the progress of education of women.

Between 200 B.C. and A.D. 1200, India was subjected to a continuous series of foreign invasions. Women were began to ^{be}looked ^{upon}down as fragile and morally weak, and their social status began further deteriorating.

"Ill-educated and unfamiliar with the realities of the world outside their homes, their status became very low. However, in the wealthy and learned sections of the society, they did receive sufficient education to enable them to manage house-hold affairs; but, even in such cases, there was no increase in status. Another exception was in Kshatriya families, where girls were cared for and given honourable positions in the house-hold; but, with the advent of the Muslim rule, such examples became less".(38)

In the medieval India, the social status of women saw further deterioration. Her position became a lowly one. "The chief function of a woman both in Hindu and Moslem society was to bear and rear children; otherwise, her sole purpose was to please her husband. As girls, wives and widows, women were no more than subordinates and dependents" (39). This further deterioration in the social status of women very adversely affected their access to education. Education of girls was confined to a few and it took the form of the zanana education which was further impeded by early marriages.

The powerful social prejudices operating in the first half of the nineteenth century are seen from the finding of the educational inquiries ordered by Munro in Madras (1822) and by Elphinstone in Bombay (1823-25) and the educational surveys made by William Adam in Bengal (1835-38). The Bombay Inquiry mentions that the common schools of the time were meant for boys only. "Native custom excludes females from the advantage of education"(40). William

Adam in Bengal found that female education was practically non-existent. Adam's observations were :

"Absolute and hopeless ignorance is in general the lot of females. The notion of providing the means of instruction for female children never enters into the mind of parents; and girls are equally deprived of that important domestic instruction which is sometimes given to boys. A superstitious feeling is alleged to exist in the majority of Hindu families, principally by the women and not discouraged by the men, that a girl taught to write and read will soon after marriage become a widow, an event which is regarded as nearly the worst misfortune that can befall the sex; and the belief is also generally entertained in native society that intrigue is facilitated by a knowledge of letters on the part of females" (41).

The social prejudice against educating girls was so strong that the British officials regarded the field of education of women a dangerous area in which they refused point blank to tread. This was evident even as late as in 1850 from a Minute by Sir J.H. Littler, a member of the Executive Council of the Governor-General. A proposal was before the Government to take over the control of a girls' school established by J.E.D. Bethune. Commenting on this proposal Sir Littler wrote :

"The proposition, though apparently not unreasonable, I declined on the grounds that it was not usual for Government to interfere in such matters either directly or indirectly..... The scheme of female education is doubtless unpopular, and looked upon by the mass, with fear and dread, whether Hindus or Mahomedans. Will it not involve a dereliction of the principle of neutrality to which the Government is pledged in like cases ?" (42)

William Adam, in his First Report on indigenous education in Bengal refers to the practice of "an allowance of a pice a head to women under the name of hurkarees, for collecting the girls daily and bringing them to school, as no respectable Hindu will allow his daughters to go into the street except under proper protection"(43). The social prejudice against sending girls to schools was so powerful in those days that the high class Hindu families preferred giving zanana education to their daughters by engaging lady teachers that were available ^{and they} were mostly Christians and social prejudices against employing Christian women teachers to give tuitions to girls at home were equally strong. This was evident from the testimony of Mrs. Wilson, the foremost of the crusader for girls' education in those days.

"Seventeen years ago a native gentleman asked for a 'Lady teacher' for his females; one went regularly for a few months; after which the gentleman called again to say he must give it up, as he could not bear continual taunts he had to endure from Brahmans and other friends for allowing a Christian lady to enter his house..... Eleven years since another high family received instruction for about a year from a Christian female, when domestic affliction caused the family to withdraw from all Christian intercourse".(44)

The following excerpt from Nurullah-Naik's 'History of Education in India' throws further light on the social factors and forces hindering girls' access to women's education:

"The social position of women also was far from satisfactory. Among the Muslims, the evils of purdah and segregation were the chief obstacles to progress, although women had property rights and a liberal set of marriage and divorce laws. Among the Hindus, child-marriages were very common; women had very limited property rights and the marriage laws were far too unfavourable to women. The upper class women suffered from customs such as Sati, absence of divorce and enforced asceticism for widows, while among the lower castes, customs like Devadasis and female infanticide prevailed to some extent. Over and above all these, there was, among all sections of the male population, a very strong social prejudice against the education of women. This was probably the greatest obstacle to be overcome before any headway could be made in spreading education among women". (45)

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the social handicaps to girls' elementary education had begun to lose some of its earlier severe intensity. Had it not been the case, there would not have been further progress of female education. In 1882, out of a total number of 1.27 lakhs of girls under instruction, as much as 97.6 per cent were in primary schools. Of course, the percentage of girls receiving primary education as a proportion to their total population in that age-group was very low. However, this number, though small, shows a slackening of the stiff attitude of the society to the education of girls at least at the primary stage. As the idea of women serving in Government offices was considered unthinkable at this period, the demand for the secondary or collegiate education for girls did not rise at all.

"The average Indian parent continued to be against all education of women, as in the years before 1854. But a few more enlightened parents, mainly living in cities and belonging to the more advanced sections of society, felt that there would be no harm (and probably a little gain) if their daughters learned to read and write. Secondly, the low age of marriage was another cause responsible for this over-concentration of girls at the primary stage. After all, the parent could afford to send his daughter to school only until her marriage". (46)

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, social conditions were improving for primary education of girls. But social climate had not improved for ^{the} education of girls beyond the primary stage. The age of marriage, even among these awakened classes being low - anything between 8 and 12 years of age - education beyond the primary stage was almost impossible. In 1882, for the whole of India, there were only 76 secondary girls' schools with a total enrolment of 2054, half of which were in Bengal only; the N.W.P. had only 68 girls enrolled in secondary schools and the Punjab only 8.

Even among the limited number of girls going to high schools, a large majority belonged to the three enlightened communities - the Anglo-Indians, the Indian Christians, and the Parsis. The bulk of the society - the Hindus and the Muslims still continued to be hostile to girls' education in high schools. As far as collegiate education for girls was concerned, there was only one such institution for the

whole country - the Bethune School at Calcutta in the college department of which there were only 6 girls. The Census of 1901 showed only 10 Hindu and 4 Muslim women literate in English for 1,00,000 of population.

Towards the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the Hindu Society had begun to change slowly but slightly. Several social developments were responsible for this most helpful trend towards a social change in the Hindu society in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (47). Hindus educated in the western knowledge were filled with the ideals of humanism and began to work for the social emancipation of those who suffered at the hands of the traditional closed society; movements for the liquidation of social ills such as the Sati System, caste system, ban on widow-remarriage, the low age of marriage, amelioration of the conditions of the untouchables, etc. had begun; the weakening of the joint family system; boys beginning to demand higher educational attainments in girls while selecting them as marriage-partners, began to create a favourable climate for the promotion of education among the girls. But these social factors and forces were confined mostly to the higher castes and among the educated Hindus; the vast bulk of the Hindus were not much touched by these invigorating currents of the social movements because of stark poverty and ignorance of the masses.

The social scene began to change faster first in the first two decades of the twentieth century and it gathered further momentum in the next three decades. The Hindu society has begun to realise, though still slowly but surely, the devastating influence of what Shri G.K. Gokhale described as combination of the enforced ignorance and overdone religion. "It had been amply established that all efforts at improvement in the condition of women such as the abolition of Sati, the Child-marriage Restraint Act, the removal of purdah, the movement for widow remarriage, etc. were, to a large extent, unsuccessful so long as women supported these evil practices through their own ignorance and inability to withstand reactionary social forces".(48) The national awakening, dawned in the country through the nation-wide vigorous movement of the Indian National Congress, had begun to yield results. Careers outside the home had begun to open out for women such as teaching, medicine, nurses, mid-wives, etc. "But in the case of secondary and collegiate education, most of the students in the medical and art courses were Europeans, Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians or Parsis. The Hindu and Muslim women had not yet taken kindly to these careers".(49).

It is after the third decade of the twentieth century that the change in the social factors and forces began to have a perceptible impact on the growth of the education of girls. Social awakening among women and the vigorous

activities of Women's Indian Association under the president-ship of Mrs. Annie Besant with its 87 branches spread all throughout the country proved to be a single strong factor in the spread of women's education. "In time its members realised that in order to effectively promote the diffusion of education among women, the status of women had to be raised, so that the legislatures, provincial and Central, would give greater attention to women's education. The Association, therefore, became actively engaged in social reform and the cause for women suffrage" (50). Among the other social events that had ^a favourable impact on improving the social climate for ^{the} promotion and extension of education among women were the passing of the Sarda Act in 1929, which fixed the minimum age of marriage for girls at 14 and for boys at 18 years, the creation of public opinion in favour of education for women by the bitter controversy over the Age of Consent Bill, the desire on the part of boys to complete their education and secure an independent income before marriage, enactment of legislation for making widow-marriage valid, and the great crusade led by Gandhiji and ^{the} Congress for social reforms. ^{These} improved significantly the social scene which made way for increased women's education at the primary, secondary and university levels. For every 100 boys at school, there were 36 girls in primary schools, 22 girls in middle schools, 14 girls in high schools, 12 in colleges of general education and 7 in colleges of professional and special education in 1947, i.e. by the end of the British rule in India.

(51)

But these advances were mostly confined to advanced and middle class communities and classes and in urban areas. The social climate continued to be less favourable for the education of girls in villages and in backward classes and in certain conservative communities of even upper and intermediate classes.

The traditional prejudice against the education of females during the British period was based on several beliefs and convictions of the Indian society.

- The daughter, not being of a permanent economic value, not contributing directly to perpetuate the family tree and not being able to salvage a father from the pu narka, the birth of a son was more a welcome event than that of a daughter in a Hindu family;
- There was a traditional attitude limiting woman's place within the four walls of the home, introducing girls to domestic tasks at any early stage and making them take up activities in home. Thus, even after 1950, in certain classes and communities of the Indian society by traditions, girls continued to be oriented towards family life which hindered their access to education. Some of the social impediments that continued to impede the rapid progress of female education in certain parts and communities of the country were :

- Once girls reached puberty, the parents preferred to keep them home;
- Customs forbade girls to appear alone in the public;
- A fear was prevalent among people that education would threaten the girls to turn them away from their natural tasks as wives and mothers;
- The social practice of early marriage for girls came in the way of their education;
- Widowhood cut short all public appearances and resulted ⁱⁿ the confinement of girls and women within the four walls of the home; remarriages were not looked upon with favour.

Such were the social beliefs and attitude still entertained by a sizable section of the Indian society which hindered girls' access to education in India till the forties of the present century. These social factors were not confined to India alone. In the early fifties, the UNESCO's Commission on the Status of Women had collected data regarding factors contributing or hindering women's access to education from 47 countries of the world.

These data are summarised in a volume entitled "Access of Women to Education" published by UNESCO. These data indicate that such social handicaps to women's access to education continued to operate even in 1952 in Belgium, Cambodia, Ceylon, Egypt, Arab countries, Luxemburg, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Vietnam and others (52).

But, after the attainment of independence, many of the social disabilities which hindered women's access to education have lost their vigour. The social position of women has considerably improved. We have already referred to the provisions of the Constitution which guarantee a democratic and equalitarian social order. Laxmi Mishra (53) has emphasised several social developments which have almost changed the picture of women's education after 1950. These social factors are : the revolutionary change in the status of women, the emergence of middle class women from the shelter of homes; a larger number of women beginning to occupy high positions in public life and the adult franchise given to both men and women under Article 236 of the Constitution; a general decline in orthodoxy and religious observance especially in evidence among the younger educated people, wider opportunities for social^{life} and for travel thrown out to women; definite increase in inter-caste marriages, etc. Sindhu Phadke adds two further factors, viz., public participation in national development programmes, relative freedom from traditional social controls among persons in urbanized and industrialized areas as compared to those in rural areas (54).

With the great improvement in the social status of women and the extension of greater social justice to them, the education of women has begun to march ahead very fast at all the stages of education. The experience of India in the development of women's education in the post-independence

period has proved the hypothesis that social status and education of women are inter-dependent; the spread of education leads to improvement in their status which in its turn, leads to further their educational development.

2.8 ECONOMIC FACTORS AS FAVOURING OR IMPEDING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

We have already mentioned that in the Vedic Age, the position of a woman as a wife was an honoured one. She, along with the husband, was the joint owner of the household, though in actual practice she was a subordinate partner. In this age, women suffered from one main economic disability - they could hold or inherit no property. The patriarch was the sole owner and the guardian of a household (55). However, in the Vedic age, this economic condition, as we saw earlier, did not impede women's access to education. They enjoyed a good measure of equality of educational opportunity.

In the next period of the later Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads (C.1500 to C.500 B.C.), the property rights of women continued to be unrecognised, the only exception being in favour of marriage gifts of movable property (56). A gradual decline in the women's access to education had set in as the period advanced, but this was primarily due to religious and social factors rather than the economic factors.

In the age of the Sutras, the Epics and the early Smritis (C.500 B.C. to C. 500 A.D.) the position of women deteriorated considerably. This was also not due to economic factors, but to the social and religious factors of the introduction of the non-Aryan wife into the Aryan household.

In the next period of later Smritis, Commentators and Digest-writers (C.500 A.D. to C.1800 A.D.), the only sphere in which the position of women improved in this age was one of property rights. The right of the widow to inherit the share of her husband came to be eventually recognized all over the country by 1200 A.D. (57). But their social and religious position continued to deteriorate, so that this slight improvement in the economic status of women had practically no impact on their access to education. The Mohammedan women enjoyed a more fortunate position than the Hindu women in regards to property rights - they were entitled to a share of legacies and had the right to do with that share as they pleased. But the strong social factors acted as serious obstacles to education in their case also.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, the economic status of women continued to be extremely unsatisfactory. Hardly any vocation (except as a domestic servant or a wage-earner in agriculture or industry) was open to them. Girls were of no economic consequence; a son could economically support the family; but not a daughter; on the

contrary girls were rather a source of expenditure for their parents. This economic worthlessness combined with very strong social prejudices hindered the girls' access to education in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Government had very little funds to spend on education, and therefore, they preferred to direct them to be spent more on the education of boys than on the education of girls which was actually resented by the people; the Government had adopted a policy of Downward Filtration under which they educated a few of the classes who, it thought, would ultimately educate the masses. The Downward Filtration Theory was slowly evolved between 1780 and 1830 and dominated the educational scene between 1830 and 1853 (58). Thus, economic factors gave rise to the Downward Filtration Theory which limited the education of masses including that of females.

The Educational Despatch of 1854 contributed to the worsening of the economic factor for the education of girls by placing an emphasis on fees though otherwise it recommended special efforts to be made by Government to spread education among them. However, the abject poverty of the people was such that it almost forced the Government to exempt girls' schools from charging fees.

"In girls' schools, it was a job to persuade parents to send their daughters to schools, and very often rewards and prizes had to be offered to induce girls to attend them. The question of charging fees in girls' schools, therefore, was ruled out on practical considerations, because the levy of a fee, however small, would have resulted in the closure of several girls' schools and would have led to a large fall in the attendance in others. The girls' schools, therefore, were treated as an exception to the orders of the Despatch of 1854 and continued to be ordinarily free".(59)

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the opportunities for women outside home continued to be extremely limited. Even the main objective of boys to get secondary education was to obtain employment under Government. Such employment opportunities were not there for women, so they did not have that motivation to go to schools to improve their economic status. Actually, in society itself there was practically no idea that girls could be an economically viable asset. There was, again, very little of vocational education even for boys in this period. So, it can be said that the economic factors did not help at all the cause of women's education; on the contrary the absence of economic values of women hindered indirectly the cause of their education. The average parent continued to be hostile to all education of women. Education of girls was confined to the more advanced sections of the society which could afford it and that too in most cases, not beyond the primary stage. The comparatively more expensive nature

of girls' schools also acted as a deterrent. This is evident from the following observation of the Indian Education Commission (1882) :

"Generally, the maintenance of a girls' school is more expensive than that of a boys' school ! Servants have to bring the children from their homes, and the number that can be expected to attend is smaller. Hence, it is sometimes found that rates of aid even 50 per cent higher than those for boys, fail to cover the additional expenditure required".(60)

The first three decades of the twentieth century saw social revolution for women to which we made a reference in the last section. Out of this social revolution grew the political revolution for women. In the third decade, the provincial legislatures granted franchise to women. These two revolutions helped the improvement of the economic status of women. The political activities of the All-India Women's Conference resulted in further increased awakening of women and for women. Gandhiji's struggle also helped. Gandhiji said :

"I am uncompromising in the matter of women's rights. In my opinion she should labour under no legal or economic disability not suffered by man. I should treat daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality".(61)

Opportunities for women outside home were still very limited at this time. Teaching and medicine were the only two professions that could attract women. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, women had begun to enter the teaching profession. In 1882, 515 were reading in

primary training colleges. "The lead in this matter was taken as usual by the missionaries who organised a number of training colleges for women teachers, with two objects : to train women teachers for service in their own schools and to train the converted girl for a useful career which would enable her to earn a fairly decent salary and lead a respectable life"(62). Between 1901 and 1921 the women students in training schools had increased from 81 to 138.

The number of women medical students increased from 191 to 539 in 1921. By the Legal Practitioners' (Women) Act of 1923, the disability for women to enter the legal profession and do practice was removed. The World War II acted as a very powerful economic force towards the increasing economic value of women. The drafting of men into the military service and rise in the cost of living, as a consequence of the World War, created a situation in which girls and women had to leave their homes to supplement or replace their men as bread-winners. This forced the Indian society to accept women as possible productive members. But only women who were educated could function as productive members of the society. This helped very significantly towards increasing women's access to education.

For the uneducated and the less educated women, the avenues for productive work were farm, factories, industries and other occupations which required manual labour. In 1922

2,06,887 women worked in some 5144 factories as against 10,86,457 men labourers. In 1940, the women labourers working in 10,900 factories were 2.47 lakhs against the corresponding figure of 15.97 lakhs for men (63). In rural India, women worked mostly at home and in the fields. Their daily wages in factories in cities were also half of those of men. The work was for the whole day. Therefore, the pre-occupation of women in productive manual labour came in the way of their education.

In the first half of the twentieth century, careers for educated women had begun to increase but very slowly and that too very inadequately. Careers in medicine, nursing, mid-wifery, teaching, and as office-clerks, secretaries, telephone operators, etc. had begun to open up for educated girls. This development added further incentive to the education of girls beyond the primary stage. Helped by the changing social conditions, the earlier prejudice against sending girls to English teaching schools had begun to lose its intensity. In another sense, Indians, particularly the higher castes among the Hindus, realized the economic advantages of giving secondary education to their daughters inasmuch as such an education increased their market value in marriage. Thus, economic factors affecting women's education had begun to improve, though slowly. But most of these developments took place in cities; the rural girls and women were largely unaffected

by this changing economic scene. Secondary and higher education for women began to flourish in cities and that too the development was mostly confined to Anglo-Indians, Indian Christians, the Parsis and the higher castes among the Hindus. It is only after the Second World War, and that too, the resulting rising cost of living which forced the society to send out educated women and girls to take up economically productive work in many fields.

Economic factors thus began to assist the growth and development of women's secondary and higher education in forties. But it also served as a serious obstacle in extending compulsory primary education for girls. Between 1918 and 1930 almost all British Provinces had enacted Acts for making primary education compulsory for both boys and girls. But compulsory education made a slow progress in the case of both boys and girls for economic reasons :

"Agriculturists require the help of their children in a number of ways. For instance, a grown-up child can take care of a younger child when the parents are away at work; he or she can go out and earn something in order to help the family to maintain itself; or the child may assist the family by tending cattle or in operations connected with the sowing and harvesting season. In all such cases compulsion became a hardship and attempts were made to evade it".(64)

During the British rule, the masses were very poor. A large number of the people could not afford even the education of their sons, the education of their daughters

was, therefore, out of ^{the} question. Compulsory Acts could break down in the case of parents who were not in ^{an} economic position to send their children to school.

India became independent in 1947. After independence, she took recourse to national planning with a view to expanding and enriching the national economy and raising the standards of living of her people. In fact, planning was advocated much before Independence by individuals, groups, the Congress Party as well as the Government, and a number of committees were set up and proposals for post-war reconstruction and development were actually prepared. But, real, systematic and effective work in national planning began after independence. A Planning Commission was set up by the Government of India in March 1950. The First Five-Year Plan of National Development was submitted to the Parliament in December 1952. Economic planning of the country was viewed, right from the beginning, as "an integral part of a wider process aiming not merely at the development of resources in a narrow technical sense, but at the development of human faculties and the building up of an institutional frame-work adequate to the needs and aspirations of the people (65). The long-term objective of planning was of doubling the national and per capita income.

The first three Five-Year Plans brought about considerable economic development which improved remarkably women's opportunities for increased education. The First Plan aimed at creating the base for more rapid and economic and industrial advance in the future. What was more significant for the advances in women's education was that it also initiated some of the basic policies by way of social change and reforms of social institutions. The Second Plan carried this trend and emphasis further and placed before the country the objective of creating a socialistic pattern of society. In the Second Plan for agriculture and community development Rs. 530 crores or 11 per cent of the total plan outlay was spent; this allocation improved to Rs. 1068 crores or 14 per cent of the total outlay of the Third Plan; village and industries received Rs. 175 crores or 4 per cent in the Second Plan and Rs. 264 crores or 4 per cent in the Third Plan; organised industry and minerals were allocated Rs. 900 crores or 20 per cent in the Third Plan; transport and communications got Rs. 1300 crores or 28 per cent in the Second Plan and Rs. 1486 crores or 20 per cent in the Third Plan and social services received Rs. 830 crores or 18 per cent in the Second Plan and Rs. 1300 crores or 17 per cent in the Third Plan (66).

These Five-Year Plans of National Development began to change the economic conditions of the people. They made a beginning in utilising to the fullest possible extent the

manpower resources of the country and in ensuring substantial expansion in the employment opportunities and bringing about reduction in disparities of income and wealth and a more even distribution of economic power. It is precisely these conditions which helped, from 1952 onwards, the further improvement of women's access to education, especially at the secondary and higher education stages.

Thus, the growing national economy gave a further momentum to the growth of women's education in the country. With the growth in per capita income, the cost of living has gone up at a fast rate between 1950-51 and 1965-66. If 1950-51 is given a base for index of 100, the cost of living ~~xx~~ index for working classes was 165 in 1965-66 (67). This rising index of living cost has forced middle class and lower class families to send out their women folk to work outside home, and as more education would fetch more earning, they tend to give more and more education to their females than before independence. This is how economic factors affected women's access to education in the last century and a half.

2.9 POLITICAL FACTORS (1)

GOVERNMENT EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Like religious, social and economic factors, the political factors also played a vital role in impeding or favouring

women's access to education. Under political factors we will discuss government educational policy in historical perspective and the political set-up, the constitution and democratic institutions and their functioning which have affected women's access to education. In this section, we will examine government educational policy in reference to the development of women's education.

The policy adopted by the Government during the British rule and by the Government of India after the attainment of Independence in regard to the education of women constituted a powerful factor in helping or hindering the progress of education of women in India.

At the advent of the British rule in India, the policy of the East India Company was one of strict neutrality in the spheres of social and religious life of the people. This policy of neutrality was put forward by government officers to pursue a no-action policy towards women's education, as it was feared that any direct attempt on the part of the Government to educate women would anger the people and injure their religious feelings which could result in very great commotion among the masses. The stand taken by the government officers during the Company's rule in regard to the Government's initiative and action to spread education among women is evident from a Minute written by Sir J.H. Litter in 1850, to which a reference has been already made. Sir Litter said :

"The scheme of Female Education is doubtless unpopular and looked upon by the mass, with fear and dread, whether Hindus or Mahomedans. Will it not involve a dereliction of the principle of neutrality to which the Government (I have always understood) is pledged in like cases ?" (68)

Lord Bentinckⁿ and Lord Dalhousie tried to bring about a change in this neutral attitude and policy on the part of the British officers by deciding to extend the patronage of Government for spreading education among women. Lord Dalhousie, in his orders dated 11th April 1850, had emphasised that "Government ought to give its frank and cordial support to female education" (69). He called upon the government officers not only to encourage but actually assist institutions of female education. But the wheels of official machinery moved slowly. Rev. J. Tucker of Madras in his evidence before the Parliamentary Committee of 1853 had said that though the Governor-General had taken up Mr. Bethune's female school, he was not aware that the Government had rendered any help as a Government for female education (70).

The Wood's Despatch of 1854 continued the trend set in by the enlightened British Governor-Generals like Bentinck and Dalhousie. The Despatch recognised that by female education "a far greater impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education of men". It categorically expressed a desire "for the extension of

female education". Thus, in the fifties of the nineteenth century, a Government policy favouring the encouragement of female education had emerged, but it was restricted to the expression of appreciation and extension of assistance to the private effort in this field; it did practically nothing to take initiative and start Government direct efforts to push up female education. The strong section of the British officers of those days was not enthusiastic about female education and, therefore, did not enforce sincerely and vigorously the Government policy of aiding female education liberally. It was true that the newly established Provincial Education Departments started some girls' schools, wherever it was possible to do so without any strong public opposition. Between 1854 and 1882, Government opened for girls 1 college, 6 secondary schools, 605 primary schools and 4 normal schools. But these were indeed extremely meagre efforts considering the vast size of the women's population. For these limited efforts to spread female education, not only the social forces but also the half-hearted attitude of Government officials and the scant financial resources made available for female education were responsible. The favourable change in Government's attitude for the promotion of female education was not adequately matched by placing for it sufficient funds. The Indian Education Commission (1882), therefore recommended that -

"public funds of all kinds - local, municipal and provincial - should be chargeable in an equitable proportion for the support of girls'

schools as well as boys' schools, and that the former, in an earlier stage of development, should receive even something more than what might appear to be a strictly impartial share of encouragement. Public opinion in this matter cannot yet be accepted as the standard of what ought to be done".(71)

Thus, the Indian Education Commission sought to lay down a Government policy of spending on equitable terms, on the education of boys and girls, but beyond that it did not go further. The comments of Nurullah and Naik on this are significant.

"The Commission did not advocate compulsion for girls. It did not advocate a rapid expansion of girls' schools under the direct control of Government. It merely recommended that the education of women should be expanded on a voluntary basis. This could not have worked satisfactorily because, as admitted by the Commission itself, the public opinion of this period was not much in favour of the education of women."(72)

The Indian Education Commission brought about a slight change in the lines of policy which had already been developed regarding the education of women. But this altered policy merely touched the fringe of the problem and could not result in the rapid expansion and development of women's education thereafter. Not that women's education did not make any progress - some advance was actually achieved, but it was slow and very small. As Lord Curzon observed in 1904,

"Though some advance has been made, female education, as a whole, is still in a very backward condition. The number of female scholars in public schools in the year 1901-02 was 444,470 or less than a ninth of the number of male scholars."(73)

Though under Lord Curzon's rule in particular and between 1901 and 1921 the State assumed a more active role in education than in the past, nothing happened beyond the appointment of suitable teachers, organization of model schools and provision of larger funds for the education of women. The Government Resolution on Educational Policy (1904) also did not go much further. The education of women continued to be left to the enthusiasm and resources of the private enterprise. Gopal Krishna Gokhale made heroic efforts, between 1910 and 1913 to make Government adopt the principle of compulsory primary education, but he could not succeed. The Government Resolution on Educational Policy (1913) laid down a policy similar to that of Lord Curzon. The Resolution reiterated the importance of female education, emphasised its role in lending an educational and moral tone to the people, advocated liberal treatment to girls in scholarships and fees, directed a change in the nature of their education by stating that it should be practical with reference to the position which they would fill in social life and recommended that the services of women should be more freely enlisted for instruction and inspection of girls' schools. (74) Not that the Resolution did not help the cause of female education - it helped its expansion - but it did not lay down a firm and bold policy that could have really given a fillip to the cause of female education and paved way for its rapid expansion.

The period between 1921 and 1937 saw the operation of Diarchy with the portfolio of education transferred to Indian Ministers. This brought about a change in Government's policy to the education of women to some extent. During this period primary education became compulsory, at least in law, for both boys and girls, though the enforcement was weak and superfluous. Indian ministers of education paid greater attention than the British administrators in the past to the spread of female education and their educational policy was more firm and helpful to the cause of women's education. The Hartog Committee (1927-29) tried to introduce a new element in Government's policy towards female education - making a planned, comprehensive and large-scale drive. The Committee pleaded that "priority should now be given to the claims of girls' education in every scheme of expansion"(75). The Government's policy was moving towards the acceptance of the stand that education was not the privilege of one sex, but equally the right of both the sexes and that neither one sex nor the other could advance by itself without the strain on the social and national system and injury to itself. The Hartog Committee too observed,

"The time has come to redress the balance, and we believe that the difficulties in the way of women's education are beginning to lose their force and the opportunity has arrived for a great new advance."(76)

Provincial autonomy operated during 1937-1947. Most of the difficulties that had hindered the work of Indian ministers between 1921 and 1937 disappeared. The Congress Party came in power in many provinces. It was wedded to the cause of female education. The Congress Ministers would have given a great momentum to the speedy spread of female education had they remained longer in office. But they remained in office for less than three years. Between 1940 and 1945, owing to the outbreak of World War II, Caretaker Governments were placed in the charge of Provinces. Nothing much by way of educational development or reconstruction was done during these transitory years. The popular ministries came back again in power in 1946. India attained its precious freedom in 1947.

In the post-independent India, Government's policy in education has undergone a revolutionary change. Some of the features of this change that have relevance for the rapid growth and development of women's education are as under :

- The Indian Constitution laid down in Article 45 obligations of State governments to provide universal, compulsory and free primary education for both the sexes, irrespective of any difference of caste, colour or creed or of any social or economic status.
- Under the Constitution, equality of status and opportunity for man and woman were provided which had a very

great impact on the formulation of educational policy in regard to women since 1950.

- Between 1945 and 1956, the views of the Sargent Committee which did not favour looking upon women's education as a special problem ~~prevailed~~ but as a part of the general education for both the sexes prevailed. The University Education Commission (1948-49) stressed, in this vein, equal opportunities for women in colleges, the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) felt that at the present stage of our social evolution, there is no justification to deal with women's education separately. Every type of education open to men should also be open to women. (77)
- In the post-war schemes of educational development, which were generally worked out between 1947 and 1952, no major special schemes for the development of education of women were included. (78)
- A major shift in the educational policy was the appointment of the National Committee on Women's Education in 1958.
- The Report of this Committee in 1958-59 brought about significant changes in the Government's policy in regard to women's education :
 - (i) Belated recognition of education as a major and special problem by the Government of India on the recommendation of the National Committee on Women's Education;

- (ii) Schemes began to be included in the Five-Year Plans to correct as rapidly as possible regional imbalance existing in different States and within individual States in different regions, to begin with, at the compulsory primary stage;
- (iii) Increased provision of funds for opening more girls' high schools in the Five-Year Plans;
- (iv) Creation of a special machinery to deal with the problems of women's education;
- (v) Recognition of the responsibility of the Centre to see that parity between the education of boys and girls is reached as early as possible, and also to see that education of girls and women is developed evenly in all parts of the country;
- (vi) The Centre agreeing to prepare targets to be attained and also to guide the States in preparing development plans for the education of girls and women in their areas and to assist the States financially in implementing the approved plans;
- (vii) Appointment in each State of a woman as a Joint Director and placed in charge of the education of girls and women;
- (viii) Provision of funds for the construction of hostels for girls and staff quarters for women;
- (ix) Adoption of co-education at the lower primary and at the middle school stages, but more and more separate high schools for girls be established

specially in rural areas, at the same time giving parents full freedom to admit their girls to boys' high schools if they so desire;

- (x) Provision of more diversified courses for girls at the secondary stage with a view to preparing them for various vocational opportunities open for women;
- (xi) Adoption of vigorous measures to increase the output of women teachers and to employ them in increasing numbers;
- (xii) Providing residential quarters, special allowances and such other liberal inducements to women teachers to go to rural areas to serve in rural schools;
- (xiii) Provision of a large number of scholarships for girls at various stages of instruction and training;
- (xiv) Introduction of parity of pay for women teachers based on their qualifications;
- (xv) Provision of part-time instruction for girls and part-time employment of women teachers, etc. etc.

These developments in Government educational policy have been largely due to the recommendations of the National Committee on Women's Education and also due to increased public awakening for the education of women. It is hoped that these revolutionary changes in Government policy, provision of improved funds for women education and the

leadership exercised by the Centre in directing efforts of State Governments to correct the existing imbalance in women's access to education in their areas would largely help the cause of female education in India.

2.10 POLITICAL FACTORS (2) :

NATIONALISM AND TRANSFORMATION INTO A DEMOCRATIC STATE

We will now discuss briefly the second aspect of the political factors, viz, the rising tide of nationalism in the early decades of the twentieth century and adoption of a democratic republican structure of government by the country after the attainment of independence in 1947. Nationalism and national renaissance constituted, in the early decades of the twentieth century, a powerful force that helped in reducing the rigour of the social and economic factors that hampered women's access to education and gave a momentum to the movement for women's education. In fact, nationalism had begun to appear on the national scene from the nineties of the last century. It is claimed that the inquiry of the Indian Education Commission of 1882-83 had led to nation-wide awakening of educational thought.(79) The Swadeshi Movement in education got into stride immediately after the partition of Bengal and its spirit soon spread in every facet of national life including education. Among the number of educational reforms that this movement

struggled to effect, one was related to the expansion of women's education. The movement for national education received an impetus from the Resolution on the subject passed by the Indian National Congress in 1906 which stated that "the time has arrived for the people all over the country earnestly to take up the question of national education for both boys and girls, and organise a system of education, literary, scientific and technical, suited to the requirements of the country, on national lines and under national control, and directed towards the realisation of national needs"

The partition of Bengal and Curzon's high brow policy brought about the first political and nationalistic upheaval in the country. The second upheaval occurred in 1920-22 when the Swadeshi Movement was born. Many national institutions sprang up in different parts of the country. The national awakening pervaded all fields, political, social, economic, educational and cultural. This awakening created a better climate and demand for women's education. "Hardly a Congress or debating society existed which failed to give the problem its attention, hardly an Indian newspaper or journal failed to air the subject. Mrs. Annie Besant delivered a memorable series of public lectures in Madras entitled "Wake up, India", in which she emphasised the need to abolish child marriages and to give every woman the opportunity of literacy." (80)

The Women's Indian Association began demanding the enfranchisement of women. The same spirit of nationalism led the provincial governments to grant women enfranchisement and later on permit them to enter legislatures. The All-India Women's Conferences began to demand for equal rights for women. Several Congress leaders came out publicly championing the cause of social justice and equality of educational opportunity for women. Dadabhai Naoroji said,

"I urge Government with every earnestness to develop women's education to its utmost extent as one of the most powerful and effective means of creating the auxiliary and important home education, of raising the social conditions and of promoting the general civilization of the people of this country. Good and educated mothers only will raise good and educated sons." (81)

Gopal Krishna Gokhale talked of how a combination of enforced ignorance and overdone religion had not only made women in India willing victims of customs, unjust and harmful in the highest degree and how it also had made them the most formidable and most effective opponents of all change (82). Mahatma Gandhiji proclaimed, "I am uncompromising in the matters of women's rights. In my opinion she should labour under no legal disability not suffered by man. I should treat daughters and sons on a footing of perfect equality." (83)

Sarojini Naidu once referred in a speech to a lively correspondence that was started in The Indian Ladies Magazine as to whether we should or should not educate our women.

"The women with one voice pleaded their own cause most eloquently, but when it came to the man, there was division in the camp. Many men doubtless proved themselves true patriots by proving themselves the true friends of education for the mothers of the people. You men of India are today what you are because your fathers in depriving your mothers of the immortal birth right, have robbed you. Restore to your women their ancient rights of education, for, as I have said, it is we, and not you, who are nation builders and without our active cooperations at all points of progress all your Congress and Conferences are in vain. Educate your women and the nation will take care of itself, for it is true today as it was yesterday, and will be to the end of human life that the hand that rocks the cradle is the power that rules the world." (84)

The political movement launched by the Indian National Congress helped considerably in creating a favourable public opinion among the nationally minded educated men and women for providing increased educational opportunity to women.

We have already referred to the question as to how the cause of women's education was helped by the transfer of the portfolio of education to Indian ministers responsible to people under the Diarchy and how the introduction of provincial autonomy and the assumption of office by the Congress in most of the Indian provinces further gave a fillip to the expansion of women's education.

After the attainment of independence, the adoption of a democratic form of government by the country further helped the cause of women's education. With the adoption of democracy as a base of its political framework, the outlook of Government and of people in regard to women's education changed completely.

The Constitution adopted by the nation guarantees seven broad categories of fundamental rights which include the right to equality in several spheres including education to both the sexes. The Directive Principles of State Policy lay down that the State shall strive "to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political, shall inform all the institutions of the national life. These principles further require the State to direct its policy in such a manner as to secure the right of all men and women to an adequate means of livelihood, equal pay for equal work and within the limits of its economic capacity and development to make effective provision for securing the right to work, education and public assistance in the event of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement or other cases of undeserved want.(85) Articles 15(1), 16(1) and 16(2) of the Constitution protect any citizen *from* being discriminated by the State on grounds only of religion, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them. Equality of opportunity for all citizens ~~is~~ guaranteed. The adoption

of such a democratic social order under the Constitution has served as another powerful force for increasing substantially women's access to education in the post-independent India.

2.11 EDUCATIONAL FACTORS AS FAVOURING OR IMPEDING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Educational factors also proved as formidable obstacles to the women's access to education.

During the first half of the nineteenth century, we have already seen that the system of zanana education largely prevailed. Of course, it was the result of social prejudices against educating women in public schools, and the prevalence of Purdah among the upper classes of the society. But this system largely curtailed the scope of female education restricting it to the well-to-do families. The Christian Missions made it a modus operandi for getting an access into the homes of the upper classes. Thus, the system of zanana education both helped and, in a way, hindered the spread of female education particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Wood's Despatch emphasised the educational value of female education by observing that "by the means of a good education to the daughters a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of

the people than by the education of men." But, unfortunately the Wood's Despatch did not go much beyond recommending that schools for females should be included among those to which grant-in-aid might be given. The Despatch talked of extending frank and cordial support of Government to schools for females and contented itself by appreciating the efforts and enterprises of private individuals who had shown active interest in the spread of female education. Primary education of masses (including girls and women) in a vast and big country like India was so costly an affair that no tangible progress was possible unless Government took a bold stand and accepted all the educational, administrative and financial liabilities involved in the challenging task.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the private educational enterprise by Indians came to the forefront. Lion-hearted efforts were launched to set up schools for girls, but with their limited resources and amidst social apathy, the Indian private enterprise could not do much in the field of female education. Further, the vast net-work of indigenous educational institutions which was a strong feature of Indian education prior to 1854, almost disappeared during this period. This was a serious blow to the cause of female education. In fact, in this period, the schooling facilities for girls were extremely limited; and the indigenous schools, in a way, were a mighty help especially in rural areas for the education of girls; but with the

systematic hostility shown towards indigenous schools by the Government officials, this valuable system of mass education completely disappeared from the scene by 1902.

The indigenous schools were replaced by a new type of primary schools. It is some times argued that this new type of primary schools helped the cause of female education, as they contained a fair sprinkling of girls and of Harijan pupils (86), whereas the indigenous schools could attract a few girls. But the validity of this claim is uncertain.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century two other educational factors came in the way of ^{the} rapid spread of female education, viz., prejudice against co-education and the lack of differentiation of curricula and books for girls. The popular prejudice against the co-education of girls was so much at this time that out of the total 1.27 lakhs of girls under instruction in 1882 only 0.42 lakh or 33 per cent were in mixed schools. This shows that out of every three Indian parents, two preferred to send their daughters to separate girls' schools, the number of which was quite small. Again, Indian society did not look with favour on the employment of male teachers in girls' schools; the educational situation worsened all the more by the fact that women teachers were not available in sufficient numbers. Thus, the popular prejudice against co-education and the employment of male teachers in girls' schools hindered the progress of female education.

At this time of the history, girls had hardly entered the high schools and colleges. Whatever expansion of female education could be made was concentrated at the primary stage. Even at this stage a demand for differentiation of curricula was made. Two main arguments were put forward in this connection, viz., a different syllabus for girls' schools was necessary because "the average school-life of a girl was very much shorter than that of a boy; and secondly, the subjects like needle-work which had a special utility for women ought to be included in the syllabus for girls' schools in preference to other subjects".(87) As the subjects of instruction laid down by Government Departments for girls in different Provinces did not in general differ much from those for boys, parents became less enthusiastic to send their daughters even to primary schools. Though the Indian Education Commission (1882-83) was not prepared to attach much significance to this kind of objection made by the public to the instruction of girls, it did observe that "it ought not to be taken for granted that instruction which is suitable for boys must necessarily be good for an Indian girl. In purely literary subjects, girls need not go so far as boys, and there are subjects of a practical kind to which girls might at least be introduced during their school course."(88) Despite the recommendation of the Indian Education Commission, very little happened in differentiating curricula for girls' schools which resulted in damping the

the enthusiasm of Indian parents for the education of their daughters at this period of the history.

In the early years of the twentieth century, Lord Curzon referred to as obstacles to female education besides social prejudices and attitudinal factors educational obstacles ^{such} as lack of suitable teachers and lack of proper schools for girls. (89) Scarcity of women teachers to man girls' schools constituted a formidable obstacle at this time. The Government Resolution on Educational Policy (1913) referred to the efforts made by the Government to reduce the social opposition to female education. Government tried to improve the educational situation so far as it concerned females by trying to bring education to females "through the agency of governesses, within the reach of purdah ladies, by increasing the number of ladies on the inspecting staff and by replacing male teachers by female teachers in government and aided schools." (90) The Calcutta University Commission (1917-19) referred to the absence of a special set-up in the Calcutta University to take care of the needs and problems of women's higher education. The Commission recommended the establishment in the Calcutta University of a Special Board of Women's Education which should be empowered to propose "special courses of study more particularly suited for women, and to organize co-operative arrangements for teaching in the women's colleges, more particularly for the training of teachers and in preparation for medical courses." (91) Thus, an inadequate number of women to staff girls'

schools, absence of practical courses suited for women, the inadequate number of girls' institutions and utter dislike of co-education by parents were the principal educational obstacles in the first two decades of the present century.

Under the Diarchy Administration between 1921 and 1937, these educational obstacles continued to obstruct the rapid growth of female education. The Hartog Committee identified several obstacles that hindered the rapid expansion of primary education. These obstacles included high proportion of wastage* and stagnation,** relapse into illiteracy, absence of systematic efforts at adult education, inadequate provision of elementary schools, unsatisfactory distribution of schools, inadequate utilization of existing schools, single teacher schools, unsuitable curricula, lack of relationship between education in rural areas and the daily lives of people, inadequacy of inspecting staff, ineffective teaching, etc. These obstacles were the educational obstacles for the expansion of women's education too. However, some educational factors favouring the spread of female education had also emerged during this period. One of them was the growing popularity of mixed schools, at least at the primary stage.

* The wastage in the case of girls* at the primary school stage was to the extent of 90.0 per cent during the period 1922-27 and 85.8 per cent during the period 1932-37.

** "Girls remained in the same class for more time than was usual or often necessary. The causes of stagnation were almost the same : the large number of single-teacher schools, inefficiency of teaching and the teachers' lack of interest." (92)

During the quinquennial 1932-37, the percentage of girls' in boys' schools to the total number of girls was 43.4 for India; it was above 50 per cent in the provinces of Madras, Assam, Orissa, Coorg, N.W.F.P., Delhi, Ajmer-Marwara, Bangalore and other Administered Areas. (93) The Women's Education Committee of the Central Advisory Board of Education observed in 1936 that "co-education at the primary stage should be the ultimate aim in all small rural areas but where the number of children were large, separate schools were desirable." (94) The second favourable factor was the recognition of the need of comprehensive and large scale planning for the rapid expansion of women's education. The Hartog Committee had recommended, in this tune, the appointment of a whole-time woman officer of high standing and experience at the head-quarters to prepare plans and programmes for the expansion of girls' education, the representation to be given to women on all local bodies and educational committees, increasing the strength of the inspecting agency for girls' schools, providing greater opportunities for higher education to girls in smaller towns and rural areas and taking all possible measures to reduction of wastage and stagnation which were greater in extent in girls' schools. (95)

Though the period between 1937 and 1947 was marred by the outbreak of the Second World War and the taking over the administration in the British provinces by the Caretaker

Governments from the popular ministries, the educational climate for women's education improved considerably. The expansion of education in all sectors was the key-note during the period. Women's education progressed at all the stages. Among the educational factors that assisted in increasing women's access to education were establishment, in a greater number, of mixed and separate educational institutions for girls at all stages of education, extension of the provision of Compulsory Education Acts to girls in some of the Provinces, greater expansion of girls' education on voluntary basis, organisation of literacy campaigns and the consequential rise of literacy percentage for women from 2.9 in 1931 to 3.4 in 1941 for British India. The introduction of the scheme of Basic Education which was intended to help making primary education of 7 years universal for both boys and girls, increased recruitment of women teachers in primary and secondary schools and the increased output of trained women teachers*. However, some of the major educational obstacles of the earlier period also continued to operate. These were inadequate provisions of schools for girls**, existence of few professional colleges for women, inadequate recruitment of women teachers to staff mixed and

* The number of trained women teachers almost doubled but that of men teachers rose only by 57.1 per cent.

** Actually the number of girls' primary schools had gone down from 31,000 in 1937-38 to 21,479 in 1946-47. Most of the British provinces showed this downward trend.... The disparity in the number of girls' and boys' schools increased during this decade.(96)

separate girls' schools, the location of a large number of training institutions for women in urban areas, the undifferentiated schools curricula, and inadequate provision of vocational, professional and special education of women and the greater dependence on private enterprise for achieving rapid strides in female education.

Prior to 1944, the general view of all educational administrators and thinkers was to regard the problem of women's education as a special problem. But the Sargent Committee struck a note which paved way for a further impediment to the speedy growth of women's education. It recommended that the problem of women's education should be treated as a part of the 'whole' problem of education. The effect of this stand proved disastrous for the growth of women's education after 1944 :

"The observations of the Sargent Report..... resulted in relegating to the background the so-called old-fashioned concept of treating the education of women as a special problem. The Indian Universities Commission (1948-49) no doubt included a special Chapter on the education of women and also emphasised its importance in national life. But they were still led by general attitude of this period and to dispose it off under the general observation that, once more equal opportunities are provided to women in colleges, nothing more significant need be done. The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53).....said "at the present stage of our social evolution, there is no special justification to deal with women's education separately..... Between 1945 and 1956, therefore, the general trend in the country was to ignore the needs of education of women rather than to emphasise them."(97)

In 1957, the First All-India Educational Survey was made. This survey revealed considerable inadequacies in educational facilities in rural habitations. On 31st March 1957, out of 8.40 lakhs habitations with a population of 27.96 crores, only 2.29 lakhs habitations (forming 27.26 per cent of the total) with a population of 16.71 crores (forming 59.75 per cent of the total) had primary schools in them (98). In rural areas, parents are usually averse to sending their daughters to schools outside their villages. This was proved by the fact that out of the total girls' enrolment reported by the Survey, 86.92 per cent were local and only 13.08 per cent came from the neighbouring villages. Therefore, girls in 3/4ths of the total habitations with a 40.24 per cent of the total rural population had practically no access to even primary education because of the absence of any schools in them. Such school-less habitations were in large proportions in all the States and the Union Territories. But comparatively some States and Union Territories were better placed than others in having habitations with schools in them. The best position was in Kerala and Bombay which had respectively 53.95 per cent and 53.22 per cent of their habitations having primary schools in them. In the range 40 per cent to 45 per cent habitations with schools in them fell the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Mysore and Punjab; in the range 30 per cent to 40 per cent fell the States of Madras and Orissa; the other States had less than 20 per cent of total habitations

having schools in them. Among the Union Territories, Delhi had 65.74 per cent and Manipur had 34.82 per cent habitations having each a primary school; the remaining had more school-less habitations. (99)

At the middle school stage, the Survey revealed that only 26,267 habitations, forming 3.13 per cent of the total number of habitations each had a middle school located locally. Thus, a total population of 354.6 lakhs enjoyed middle schools in home habitations (100). But then, 3.97 habitations forming 47.21 per cent of the total could also be included in this category having middle school facilities within a distance of three miles from the home of the child. At the middle school stage also, the percentage of local girls was as high as 72.14, with the non-local 27.86 per cent coming from neighbouring villages. This again shows that the middle school facilities that could really encourage parents to send their daughters to school were very inadequate.

The situation regarding high school facilities was somewhat like this.

"It was found that facility for education at high school stage existed in 4,500 habitations, forming 0.54 per cent of the total number of habitations. These were found to serve further more 2.97 lakhs habitations forming 35.36 per cent of the total number of habitations. Of the total habitations served, 1.49 per cent had high schools in them and the remaining 98.51 per cent were served by a high school in the adjoining habitation." (101)

Parents' preference to sending their daughters to local high schools is also noticeable at this stage. Of the total number of girls enrolled in high schools, 61.5 per cent were local and 38.5 per cent were non-local. (The percentage of non-local boys was 61.65).

The results of the First All-India Education Survey expose sharply that the inadequate schooling facilities existed in the country for both boys and girls. Unless this picture was corrected, rapid stride in girls' education was not possible.

The Second Five-Year Plan complained about slow expansion of schooling facilities by States. "At the secondary stage, the education of girls lags seriously behind. At present, out of the total population of 12 million girls at the age-group 14-17 years, about 3 per cent are attending schools. Plans of States do not provide in a sufficient measure for the education of girls, for, the number of high schools is expected to increase from 1,500 to 1,700 only by the end of the Second Plan."

The shortage of educational facilities for girls' education has continued till today. The Second All-India Educational Survey (1966) has revealed the following facts about this (102):

- 9,82,251 habitants or 12.77 per cent of the total habitations in the country are not served by primary sections in them or within one mile;

- Considering the schooling facilities separately among the States, it was found that in many States and Union Territories a situation of nearly universal provision of schooling facilities has been obtained, especially in Gujarat, West Bengal, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Madras and Bihar where more than 97 per cent of the rural population are served by primary section at present. Among the Union Territories also the position is high except in Himachal Pradesh;
- 23.89 per cent of the total primary sections in the country are incomplete primary sections. This may hinder the primary education of boys and girls;
- 69,424 or 7.07 per cent of the total habitations had middle schools in them and 72.58 per cent of the total habitations were served by middle schools sections in them or within a walking distance of three miles;
- 6,01,154 or 61.20 per cent of habitations were served by secondary sections which means that there were still 39.80 per cent of habitations not served by high schools. In rural areas, 71.37 per cent of habitations had secondary schools within the habitation or upto a walking distance of five miles.

The findings of the Second Survey show that educational facilities are still inadequate to be able to provide for increased enrolment of girls' education at the school stage.

In 1966, women teachers constituted only 21.7 per cent of the total teacher population. Amongst the women teachers, 64.7 per cent were working in primary sections, 23.1 per cent in middle sections and 12.2 per cent in secondary sections (103). ~~Only 57.0~~ Only 57.0 per cent of women teachers were found trained. Section-wise, about 32 per cent primary, about 25 per cent middle-school, and 30 per cent secondary school women teachers were found untrained. There were striking regional variations in this respect also.

The National Committee on Women's Education was right in emphasising that educational facilities for girls should be considerably and speedily stepped up.

"We strongly recommend that the education of women should be regarded as a major and a special problem in education for a good many years to come and that a bold and determined effort be made to face the difficulties and magnitude and to close the existing gap between the education of men and women in as short a time as possible, that the highest priority should be given to schemes prepared from this point of view." (104)

2.12 FINANCIAL FACTORS AS FAVOURING OR IMPEDING WOMEN'S ACCESS TO EDUCATION IN INDIA

Financial factors, too, proved a formidable obstacle to the speedy growth and development of women's education in India.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, till 1813, Government did not accept the responsibility for educating people. In fact, the then ruling East India Company was influenced more by the motives of financial gain for itself than by any philanthropic or social welfare considerations of educating its subjects and, therefore, it resisted all attempts to increase its obligations to the Indian people that had a tendency to cut down their dividends. When the Company ultimately accepted the responsibility to educate the Indian people, under Section 43 of the Charter Act of 1813, it agreed to set aside only a sum of not less than a lakh of rupees to be utilised for education.

This amount sanctioned for educational expenditure did not exceed Rs. 10 lakhs even by 1853. "To undertake the direct education of the masses. was therefore, impossible with the meagre resources, and on financial grounds, the administrators had hardly any alternative but to educate a few." (105) Because of social antagonism and the prejudice against educating females these 'few' were only the men. This lack of funds was one of the factors that gave rise to the famous Downward Filtration Policy which dominated the Indian educational scene till 1882 and which hindered women's access to education.

The Despatch of 1854 tried to improve upon this situation. It categorically accepted the importance of women's education, and recommended that schools for females

be included among those to which grant-in-aid might be given. But beyond this the Despatch did nothing. It did not advocate special funds to be set aside for educating females.

Between 1854 and 1870, the financial administration was extremely centralised. There was only one budget for the whole of the British India. As there was no relationship between what the Provinces collected from their areas by way of revenue and the budget actually allotted to them, there was little incentive and little scope for the Provinces to spend funds on an unpopular object like female education. In 1870, Lord Mayo improved the situation by introducing the scheme of decentralisation under which education budgets became provincial. But even then the resources given to a Provincial Government were limited and as a result of that education as a whole could get a meagre grant. This situation did not leave enough scope to Provincial Governments to set aside enough money for mass education including female education. They had to lean more and more on private enterprise to shoulder the main burden of educating people.

In 1882-83, the Indian Education Commission discussed the financial aspects of female education. In the first instance, it recommended :

"We think it expedient to recommend public funds of all kinds - local, municipal and provincial - should be chargeable in an equitable proportion for the support of girls' schools as well as boys' schools; and that the former being in an earlier

stage of development, should receive even something more than what might appear to be a strictly impartial share of encouragement."(106)

The Commission did not think it necessary to define the classes of girls' schools which should receive more financial encouragement. There were so many obstacles to the progress of female education that the Commission said that the conditions on which aid was to be granted to female schools should be made as easy as possible. The Commission further observed that the maintenance of a girls' school being generally more expensive than that of a boys' school, the rates of aid even 50 per cent higher than those for boys would fail to cover the additional expenditure required. Thus, the Commission sought to make grant-in-aid conditions for girls' schools liberal with a view to encouraging private effort to promote female education.

Movements for the adoption of compulsory primary education and free education for backward and poor classes had begun almost side by side in the first decade of the twentieth century. A plea for free education was placed even before the Indian Education Commission by several witnesses.(107). It was argued that the system of taking fees in village schools prevented poor ignorant people from having free access to education. It was, therefore, suggested that no child should be debarred from an elementary education through inability to pay fees. On the contrary, provision

should be made, in any case of poverty, for supplying the child with books, clothes, etc. Against the weight of such opinion, the Indian Education Commission ought to have recommended free education for the children of poor classes and for females. But, unfortunately this it did not do, and the cause of the education of girls and boys of poor parents continued to suffer.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale carried on his struggle for compulsory and free primary education from 1906 to 1911 in the Imperial Legislative Council. In his budget speech of 1906, he talked about a scheme for making primary education compulsory and free throughout the country for both boys and girls in a period of 20 years in a phased form. He introduced a Bill for the introduction of compulsory and free primary education in 1911. But the Government refused to accept the principle of compulsory or free primary education, though the Government of the Baroda State had already gone ahead with schemes of compulsory, free primary education in its territories. The Baroda State had introduced compulsory primary education for boys in the age-group of 7-12 years and girls in the age-group 7-10 years.

Gokhale's Bill was opposed on several grounds out of which financial ground was the strongest. It was argued that the cost of the introduction of compulsory free primary education for boys and girls was prohibitive, it would result

in financial inequality and injustice and it would be objectionable to levy a special educational rate for this purpose. (108)

The Government Resolution on Educational Policy, 1913 took a stand that "a total remission of fees would involve to a certain extent a more prolonged postponement of a provision of schools in villages without them." (109) Thus, the Government Resolution did not favour free education which, in its turn, hindered the rapid progress of the females' as well as boys' primary education.

Government's expenditure on girls' education went on increasing. In 1901, the total spending on girls' education was Rs. 3.4 million which increased by 76 per cent in 1912 and became Rs. 6.07 million. It further rose to Rs. 16.31 million in 1921. (110) But this rising expenditure on girls' education continued to be very small in the light of the total population of girls and women. Again, the money spent on girls' education formed a small part of what was spent on boys' education. "The total expenditure in 1922 spent after recognised girls' institutions was but one-sixth of the expenditure spent after recognised boys' schools." (111)

Female education under Diarchy, i.e. between 1921 and 1937 progressed much because education was a transferred subject under Indian ministers, but the portfolio of finance

was a reserved subject. The system of financial arrangement between the Central Government and the Provincial Governments was such that it did not help the cause of transferred subjects in general and of education in particular. The Indian ministers were not able to obtain the funds essential for a large-scale expansion and reorganization.(112) Subjects like womens' education and the education of the backward classes suffered on that account. Absence of Central interest and assistance further aggravated the position.

The Hartog Committee (1927-29) spoke poignantly of the great disparity between the education of boys and girls which was growing year after year. It was even more significant than what appeared at first sight because it increased as one went up the educational ladder. The Committee commented that "The public expenditure on girls' education is still small compared to that on boys' education. This disparity is increasing, notwithstanding the fact that, owing to greater difficulties, girls' education must necessarily be more expensive than that of boys, and as a consequence, there is a growing disparity between the number of educated men and women."(113)

The financial factor, combined with the social factor made the total education of women very inadequate and unsatisfactory. Even in 1937, the number of girls at school was only about 2.38 per cent of the total population (as against 15 or 20 per cent that ought to have been there), and that the literacy of women was only 3 per cent. (114)

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Between 1921 and 1937, the Central grants for education had almost ceased; the after-effects of the First World War had unwholesome financial effect on the finances available for education, the economic depression of 1929 had further aggravated the financial position for education. Due to this slump, enough funds were not made available for women's education in all the provinces. Whatever funds were available for education, disproportionate funds were spent on the education of boys and of girls. For instance, in 1927, Rs. 21.99 million were spent on female education as against Rs. 163.3 million on that for men. In 1937 the figures of expenditure for women were Rs. 31.22 million as against Rs. 200.3 million for men.(115) The Tenth Quinquennial Review remarked, "Little effort has been made to correct the disproportion in expenditure between sexes."(116)

Between 1937 and 1947, under the provincial autonomy, the financial aspect of women's education improved. But the outbreak of the Second World War, the resignation of popular ministries and the installation of Caretaker Governments left some adverse effect on the finances to be made available for female education.

Despite these adverse factors the total expenditure on women's education rose from Rs. 31.05 million in 1937-38 to Rs. 66.6 million in 1946-47, i.e. it was more than double. However, the disparity between the expenditure on men's and

women's education continued. In 1946-47, while the expenditure on girls' primary education was up by 114.3 per cent, that on boys' primary education was up by 123.5 per cent. However, the expenditure on girls' high schools went ^{up} by 124.7 per cent as against that on boys' high schools by 116.1 per cent in 1947. (117) The period of 1937-1947 saw further rise in the expenditure for professional colleges for girls - it rose from Rs. 3.53 lakhs to Rs. 1.21 million.

The financial factor in women's access to education had begun to be more favourable after the third decade of the twentieth century. Even then the funds made available for women's education were meagre. This continued to be the case even in the post-independent India. The National Committee on Women's Education (1959) had, therefore, to raise its voice against this step-motherly financial policy of Government towards female education. Between 1945 and 1956, the tendency on the part of the Centre as well as the States was to regard the problem of Women's Education as a part of the whole educational problem and, therefore, they did not provide for special funds for the development of women's education. There was a slight change in the policy of the Centre towards the end of 1957. A special scheme for the development of the education of women with a provision of Rs. 2.5 crores in a total Plan outlay of Rs. 307 crores was made. The National Committee on Women's Education, inspite of the small size of the scheme, welcomed it as a

token of the belated recognition by the Government of India of a fact that the education of women was still a 'special' problem which needs 'special' measures.(118) The Committee made several recommendations of the financial type to speed up expansion of women's education and correct the existing imbalance between the education of men and women. The following recommendations of this Committee are mentioned here because they are not fully implemented and the failure on the part of the Centre and the States in that regard continues to impede women's fuller access to education :

- The highest priority should be given to schemes for closing the existing gap between the education of men and women in as short a time as possible, and funds required for the purpose should be considered to be the first charge on the sums set aside for the development of education;
- The Centre should assist the States financially in implementing approved plans of development of women's education;
- To the extent that private effort is not forthcoming, direct action should be taken by States to develop the education of girls and women and to establish special institutions for the purpose under their immediate control;

- The system of matching grants should be done away with in so far as the development of the education for girls and women is concerned and the entire financial responsibility for this programme should be that of the Government of India;
- During the Five-Year Plans, there should be special financial provision for the development of education of women at all stages.

Giving adequate attention to, and providing much larger funds than it is done so far for the education of girls at all stages and in all sectors are the needs of the day. This alone will help in correcting the imbalance existing in the education of men and women and in reclaiming women as educated, intelligent, skilled manpower for the national development.

2.13 CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion of the salient features of the cultural, social, economic, political, educational and financial factors that favoured or impeded women's access to education in India during the course of her long history leads to one important conclusion, viz., the development of women's education in an under-developed or partially developed country is a very complex enterprise. The problem of women's

education is a multi-dimensional problem, and therefore, it will have to be tackled on different fronts in a co-ordinated and integrated way. In a vast country like India, all of these factors must be operating jointly or separately; some factors may be dominant in one part of the country; others might be working as deterrents in another part of the country. Even within an individual state, these, all or some, factors may be functioning as favourable to or deterrents of the development of women's education. This study projected against an all-India canvas can certainly help in looking for the possible factors favouring or ^{in part of the country.}impeding women's access to education/ ~~as~~ What is true of the country as a whole may be largely true of individual major States also. This study pertains to the Gujarat State and many of the findings of this Chapter will be broadly applicable to Gujarat also. However, a separate treatment of cultural, social and economic background of women's education in Gujarat will be provided in the next chapter by way of reiteration and supplementation.

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